



CHAPTER 1.

AL-FĀTIHA.

(Revealed before Hijra)

Place and Time of Revelation

As reported by many traditionists, the whole of this chapter was revealed at Mecca, and from the very beginning formed part of the Muslim Prayers. The chapter has been referred to in the Quranic verse, *We have indeed given thee the seven oft-repeated verses and the great Quran* (15 : 88), which was admittedly revealed at Mecca. According to some reports, the chapter was also revealed a second time at Medina. The time of its first revelation, however, must be placed very early in the Prophet's career.

Names of this Chapter and their Significance

The best-known name of this short chapter, i.e., *Fātiḥat al-Kitāb* (the Opening Chapter of the Book), is reported on the authority of several reliable traditionists (Tirmidhī & Muslim). The name was later abbreviated into *Sūra Al-Fātiḥa*, or simply *Al-Fātiḥa*.

The chapter has been called by quite a number of names, out of which the following ten are more authentic. These are : *Al-Fātiḥa*, *Al-Ṣalāt*, *Al-Ḥamd*, *Umm al-Qur'ān*, *Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, *Al-Sab' al-Mathānī*, *Umm al-Kitāb*, *Al-Shifā*, *Al-Ruqya* and *Al-Kanz*.

These names throw a flood of light upon the extensive import of the chapter.

The name *Fātiḥat al-Kitāb* (the Opening Chapter of the Book) implies that the chapter is to be placed in the beginning of the Quran and that it serves as a key to its meaning.

Al-Ṣalāt (the Prayer) signifies that the chapter forms a perfect prayer and is an integral part of the institutional Prayers of Islam.

Al-Ḥamd (the Praise) signifies that the chapter brings to light the lofty purpose of man's creation and teaches that the relation of God to man is one of grace and mercy.

Umm al-Qur'ān (Mother of the Quran) signifies that the chapter contains the essence of the whole of the Quran, providing man in a nutshell with all the knowledge that has a bearing on his moral and spiritual welfare.

Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm (the Great Quran) signifies that although the chapter is known as the *Umm al-Kitāb* and *Umm al-Qur'ān*, it is nevertheless a part of the Quran and not separate from it, as has been supposed by some.

Al-Sab' al-Mathānī (the Oft-repeated Seven Verses) signifies that the seven short verses of the chapter virtually answer all the spiritual needs of man. It also signifies that the chapter must be repeated in every *rak'at* of Prayer.

Umm al-Kitāb (Mother of the Book) signifies that the prayer contained in the chapter has been the cause of the revelation of the Quranic dispensation.

Al-Shifā (the Cure) signifies that it provides remedy for all doubts and misgivings.

Al-Ruqya (the Charm) signifies that the chapter is not only a prayer to ward off disease but also provides protection against Satan and his followers, and strengthens the heart of man against them.

Al-Kanz (the Treasure) signifies that the chapter is an illimitable treasure of knowledge.

Al-Fātiha referred to in a Prophecy of the New Testament

The best-known name of the chapter, however, is *Al-Fātiha*. It is interesting to note that this very name occurs in a New Testament prophecy. In Rev. 10 : 1—2 it is written : “I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven...and he had in his hand a little book open : and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.” The Hebrew word for ‘open’ is *fatoah* which is the same as the Arabic word *fātiha*. Rev. 10 : 3—4 says : “And when he (the angel) had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.” The seven thunders represent the seven verses of this chapter. Christian scholars admit that the prophecy refers to the second advent of Jesus Christ, and this has been established by actual facts. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed to have fulfilled the prophecy relating to the second advent of Jesus, had constantly in his hands the little chapter, *Al-Fātiha*, and wrote several commentaries on it. He deduced arguments of his truth from its contents, and often referred to it in his speeches and writings and always used it as a model prayer, exhorting his disciples to do the same. He deduced from the seven short verses of this chapter truths which were not known before. It was as if the chapter had been a sealed book until its treasures were discovered by Hazrat Ahmad. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy contained in Rev. 10 : 4, “And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.” This prophecy referred to the fact that the *Fatoah* or *Al-Fātiha* would, for a time, remain a closed book, but that a time would come when it would become open.

Subject-Matter

This chapter contains the essence of the entire Quranic teaching. It comprises, in outline, all the subjects dealt with at length in the body of the Quran. The chapter starts with a description of the fundamental attributes of God, the pivot round which all the other divine attributes revolve, the basis of the working of the universe and of the relations between God and man. *Rabb* (the Creator, Sustainer and Developer), *Rahmān* (the Gracious), *Rahīm* (the Merciful) and *Mālikī yaum al-Dīn* (Master of the Day of Judgement)—these attributes signify that after creating man God endowed him with the best capacities and capabilities, and provided the means

and material needed for his physical, social, moral and spiritual development. Further, He made a provision that all labours and endeavours of man should have an ample reward.

The chapter goes on to say that man has been created for *'ibādat* i.e. the worship of God and the attainment of His nearness, and that he constantly needs His help for the fulfilment of this supreme object of his creation.

Then we have a comprehensive prayer in which all the urges of the human soul find full expression. The prayer teaches us that we should always seek and invoke the assistance of God that He may provide us with the means required for our success in this life and the life to come. And as man is apt to derive strength and encouragement from the good example of those noble and great souls who led successful lives in the past, he is taught to pray that just as by God's help and assistance those righteous and God-fearing men achieved the object of their life, and their labours were crowned with success, God should open up for him also avenues of moral and spiritual progress.

Finally, the prayer contains a warning that after having been led to the right path, man sometimes strays away from it, loses sight of his goal and becomes estranged from his Creator. We are taught to remain always on our guard and constantly seek God's protection against any possible estrangement from Him.

This is the subject which is put in a nutshell in *Al-Fātiḥa*, and this is the subject with which the Quran deals fully and comprehensively, citing numerous examples for the guidance of the reader.

Relation to the Rest of the Quran

The chapter is introductory to the Quran. It is an epitome of the whole Book. Thus, at the very beginning of his study, the reader knows in broad outline the subjects he should expect to find in the Quran. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the chapter *Al-Fātiḥa* is the most important of the chapters of the Quran (Bukhārī).

A Prayer that must precede the Recitation of the Quran

Muslims are bidden always to begin the reading of the Holy Book with a short prayer, soliciting God's protection against Satan. God says in 16 : 99 : *When thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected.* Now, refuge or protection implies : (1) that no evil should befall us ; (2) that no good should escape us ; and (3) that after we have attained goodness, we may not relapse into evil.

Thus, by seeking the protection of God while reciting the Quran we pray, *firstly*, that we may not miss any teaching of the Quran through weakness or negligence or in consequence of our sins, or under the influence of evil company ; *secondly*, that we may not fail to understand rightly any teaching of the Quran ; *thirdly*, that, having understood, we may not relapse into ignorance again. The prescribed words for the prayer are : *اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم* " I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected," which must precede every recitation of the Quran.

The Meaning and Significance of the Word 'Sūra'

A chapter of the Quran, and there are 114 of them, is called a *Sūra*. The word *Sūra* rendered into English as 'chapter,' means : (1) rank and eminence ; (2) a mark or sign ; (3) an elevated and beautiful edifice ; and (4) something full and complete (Aqrab & Qurṭubī). The chapters of the Quran are called *Sūras* because, (a) one is exalted in rank by reading them and attains to eminence through them ; (b) they serve as marks for the beginning and the end of the different subjects dealt with in the Quran ; (c) they are each like a noble spiritual edifice, and (d) each of them contains a complete theme.

The name *Sūra* for such a division has been used by the Quran itself as in 2 : 24 and 24 : 2. It has been used in Ḥadīth also. Says the Holy Prophet : " Just now a *Sūra* has been revealed to me and it runs as follows " (Muslim). From this it is clear that the name *Sūra* for a division of the Quran has been in use from the very beginning and is not a later innovation.



1. "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful."¹

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

¹Placed before every chapter except ch. 9; also in 27 : 31. See also 96 : 2.

1. Important Words :

ب (in) occurring here in combination with اسم (name) is a particle used to convey a number of meanings, the one more applicable here being that of 'with.' The compound word بسم therefore would mean 'with the name of.' According to Arab usage, the words *igra'* or *agra'u* or *nagra'u* or *ishra'* or *ashra'u* or *nashra'u* would be taken to be understood before بسم الله. The expression بسم الله would thus mean 'begin with the name of Allah,' or 'recite with the name of Allah,' or 'I or we begin with the name of Allah,' or 'I or we recite with the name of Allah.' In the translation the words بسم الله have been rendered as "in the name of Allah" which is a more familiar form (Lane).

اسم (name), which is derived either from اسم (a mark) or سمر (height), means a name or attribute (Aqrah). Here it is used in both senses; for, firstly, it refers to 'Allah' which is the personal name of God; and, secondly, it refers to *Al-Rahmān* (Gracious) and *Al-Rahīm* (Merciful) which are His attributive names.

الله (Allah) is the name of the Supreme Being Who is the sole possessor of all perfect attributes and is free from all defects. In the Arabic language, the word Allah is never used for any other thing or being. No other language has a distinctive name for the Supreme Being. The names found in other languages are all attributive or descriptive and are often used in the plural, but the word "Allah" is never used in the plural number. It is a simple sub-

stantive, not derived. It is never used as a qualifying word. Hence, in the absence of a parallel word in the English language, the original name "Allah" has been retained throughout the translation.

This view is corroborated by eminent authorities of the Arabic language. Says Lane : "الله (Allah) according to the most correct of the opinions respecting it is a proper name, applied to the Being Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection, the ال (al) being inseparable from it" (Arabic-English Lexicon). For a fuller discussion of the word 'Allah,' the reader is referred to *Tafsīr Kabīr* by Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community.

الرحمن (Gracious) and الرحيم (Merciful) are both derived from the same root رحم meaning, he showed mercy; he was kind and good; he forgave. The word رحمة combines the idea of رقة i.e. 'tenderness' and احسان i.e. 'goodness' (Mufradāt). الرحمن is in the measure of فعلان and الرحيم in the measure of فاعل. According to the rules of the Arabic language, the larger the number of letters added to the root word, the more extensive or more intensive does the meaning become (Kashshāf). The measure of فعلان thus conveys the idea of fulness and extensiveness, while the measure of فاعل denotes the idea of repetition and giving liberal reward to those who deserve it (Muḥīt). Thus the word الرحمن would denote "mercy comprehending the entire universe," whereas the

word **الرحيم** would denote "a mercy limited in its scope but repeatedly shown."

In view of the above, **الرحمن** is One Who shows mercy gratuitously and extensively to all creation without regard to effort or work, and **الرحيم** is One Who shows mercy in response to, and as a result of, the actions of man but shows it liberally and repeatedly. The former is applicable to God only, while the latter is applied to man also. The former extends not only to believers and unbelievers but to the whole creation; the latter applies mostly to believers. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: **الرحمن رحمان الدنيا والرحيم رحيم الآخرة** : i.e., the attribute **الرحمن** generally pertains to this life, while the attribute **الرحيم** generally pertains to the life to come (Muḥit), meaning that as this world is mostly the world of actions and the next a world where actions will be particularly rewarded, God's attribute of **الرحمن** provides man with material for his works in this life, whereas His attribute of **الرحيم** brings about results in the life to come.

The abundance of everything which we enjoy in this life, which is indeed all a favour of God, is provided for us before we do anything to deserve it or even before we are born, while the blessings in store for us in the life to come will be given to us as a reward of our actions. This shows that **الرحمن** is the bestower of gifts which precede our birth, while **الرحيم** is the giver of blessings which follow our deeds as their reward.

Commentary :

(i) The verse **بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم** is the first verse of every chapter of the Quran, except the chapter *Barā'at* which, however, is not an independent chapter but a continuation of the chapter *Anfāl*. There is a saying reported by Ibn 'Abbās to the effect that whenever any new chapter was revealed, *Bismillah* was the

first verse to be revealed, and without *Bismillah* the Holy Prophet did not know that a new chapter had begun (Dāwūd). This ḥadīth goes to prove that (1) the verse *Bismillah* is part of the Quran and not something super-numerary and (2) that the chapter *Barā'at* is not an independent chapter. It also refutes the belief expressed by some that *Bismillah* is a part only of *Al-Fātiha* and not of all the Quranic chapters. Such views are further refuted by the ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet is reported to have said definitely that the verse *Bismillah* is a part of all the Quranic chapters (Bukhārī & Quṭnī).

(ii) The Holy Prophet attached very great importance to the verse *Bismillah*. He is reported to have said that any important work which is done without reciting *Bismillah* is apt to prove devoid of God's blessings. So it is a general practice among Muslims to commence every work with a recital of this prayer.

(iii) The place of this verse in the beginning of every chapter has the following significance :

1. The Quran is a treasure of divine knowledge to which access cannot be had without the special favour of God. In 56 : 80 God says regarding the Quran, *None shall touch it except those who are purified*, meaning that except the favoured ones who have been purified by the hand of God, none shall grasp the deeper meaning of the Quran. Thus *Bismillah* has been placed at the beginning of each chapter to remind the reader that in order to have access to, and benefit by, the treasures of divine knowledge contained in the Quran, he should not only approach it with pure motives but also constantly invoke the help of God and try to lead a righteous life.

2. In the Old Testament (Deut. 18 : 18, 19) we read : "I will raise them (the Israelites) up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee (Moses), and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all

that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." As the Holy Prophet of Islam was raised in the likeness of Moses (Quran, 73 : 16), so in fulfilment of the above prophecy God so ordained that each time a new *Sūra* was revealed, it was begun by the words, *in the name of Allah*. This meant that every chapter of the Quran, *i.e.*, every new proclamation made by God through the Holy Prophet, should commence with this verse so that on the one hand might be fulfilled the prophecy made by Moses and, on the other, there might be a constant repetition of the warning to Jews and Christians that if they hearkened not to the words of the new Prophet, they would be answerable to God.

3. In the Old Testament we also read : " But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die " (Deut. 18 : 20). The verse *Bismillah* (in the name of God) has, therefore, been placed at the beginning of every chapter of the Quran so that the fact might be brought home to Jews and Christians in particular and to other peoples in general that the success which attended the career of the Holy Prophet was a positive proof of the fact that all that he spoke was spoken by the command of God ; for if it had been otherwise, he would surely have met with early destruction. The verse *Bismillah* is thus a standing challenge to Jews and Christians, and every time it is repeated at the head of a chapter it serves as an argument for the truth of the Holy Prophet. This result could not have been attained if the verse had been put only in the beginning of the Quran.

4. The verse *Bismillah* placed before every chapter of the Quran also serves another important purpose. It is a key to the meaning of each individual chapter. This is so because all

questions affecting moral and spiritual matters are related in one way or other with these fundamental divine attributes : *Rahmāniyyat* (grace) and *Rahīmiyyat* (mercy). Thus each chapter is, in fact, a detailed exposition of some aspect of the divine attributes mentioned in the verse.

(iv) Some Christian writers have raised the objection that the formula of *Bismillah* has been borrowed from earlier scriptures, insinuating that therefore it cannot be of divine origin. Wherry in his Commentary has expressed the opinion that it has been borrowed from the Zend-Avesta where it has the form :

i.e. *بنام ایزد بخشائده و بخشائش گر* With the name of God, Forgiving, Kind. A similar objection has been raised by Sale. Rodwell, however, has expressed the opinion that the Quran borrowed the formula from the Jews, among whom it was in vogue and from whom its use was borrowed by pre-Islamic Arabs. Both these criticisms are wrong and beside the mark ; for *firstly* it has never been claimed by Muslims that the formula in this or similar form was not known before the revelation of the Quran ; *secondly* it is wrong to argue that because the formula, in an identical or a similar form, was sometimes used by pre-Islamic peoples even before its revelation in the Quran, it could not be of divine origin. As a matter of fact, the Quran itself states that Solomon used the formula in his letter to the Queen of Sheba (27 : 31). What Muslims claim—and this claim has never been refuted—is that the Quran was the first scripture to use the formula in the way it did [see (iii) above]. It is also wrong to say that the formula was in common vogue among pre-Islamic Arabs, for it is well known that Arabs had an aversion from the use of the name *Al-Rahmān* for God. Again, if such formulæ for the praise of God were known before, it only goes to corroborate the truth of the Quranic teaching that there has not been a people to whom a Teacher has not been sent (35 : 25),

2. "All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,"²

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

^a6 : 2 ; 6 : 46 ; 10 : 11 ; 18 : 2 ; 29 : 64 ; 30 : 19 ; 31 : 26 ; 34 : 2 ; 35 : 2 ; 37 : 183 ;
39 : 76 ; 45 : 37.

and that the Quran is a repository of all permanent truths contained in the previous Books (98 : 4). It adds much more, of course, and whatever it takes over it improves in form or use or both.

(v) It has been asked why the word اسم (name) has been used before the word الله (Allah) in the verse *Bismillah*. This may be explained in a number of ways :

1. In the Arabic language the particle *bi* is used not only to signify connection or invoke help, but also in swearing. So if the word اسم had been dropped, the phrase بالله (*billāh*) might have meant "I swear by Allah." The introduction of اسم (name) removes this ambiguity.

2. God being the source of all goodness, even the invoking of His names proves a blessing. Says the Quran (55 : 79), *Blessed be the name of thy Lord, the Owner of Majesty and Honour*. The Holy Prophet sometimes healed people by invoking the various names of God. So the word اسم (name) has been added in order to remind the Faithful that to remember the names of God is to merit a blessing.

3. The use of the word "name" further indicates that God is hidden and can be known only through His names, i.e., attributes. By reciting *Bismillah* a believer seeks the help of God through His attributes of *Al-Rahmān* and *Al-Rahīm*.

4. Again, the inner meanings of the Quran are a guarded treasure and nobody can have access to them, except under proper authority. The person who begins a recitation with the formula, *In the name of Allah*, says, as it were,

to the guardian angels of this spiritual treasure, "I am approaching it in the name of Allah, so open to me the treasures of the inner meanings of the Quran." To one who approaches the Quran in such a spirit, the treasures will indeed be opened. The verse, *None shall touch it except those who are purified* (56 : 80), likewise shows that only the pure in spirit can find access to the deep secrets of the Quran.

5. Another reason for introducing the word "name" in *Bismillah* is to draw attention to the prophecy of Moses (Deut. 18 : 18—20) to which reference has already been made.

2. Important Words :

ال (All) is more or less like the definite article 'the' of the English language. It is used to convey a number of senses one of which is that of totality. So الحمد would mean, all kinds of praise.

حمد (praise). They say حمده i.e. he praised him. Thus حمد means 'praise'. There are four words in Arabic which are used, in varying significance, in the sense of praise or thankfulness ; viz., ثنا, شكر, مدح and حمد. Of these God has here chosen the last. *Shukr*, when used about man, expresses recognition of, and thankfulness for, benefits received, whereas *Hamd* not only embodies the idea of thankfulness but also has reference to the intrinsic qualities of the object of praise. *Thanā* indicates an idea of publicity, the root meaning of the word being repetition. The emphasis in *Thanā* is more on publicity than on personal experience. *Madh* gives a somewhat similar meaning as *Hamd* but whereas *Madh* may be false, *Hamd* is always true. Says the Holy Prophet :

دُخِّنُوا فِي وُجُوهِ الْمَدَّاحِينَ *i.e.* "Throw dust in the faces of those who praise falsely." Again *Madh* may be used about such acts of goodness over which the doer has no control, but *Hamd* is used only about such acts as are volitional (*Mufradāt*). *Hamd* also implies admiration, magnifying and honouring of the object of praise, and lowliness, humility and submissiveness in the person who offers it (Lane). Thus *Hamd* was the most appropriate word to be used here, where a reference to the intrinsic goodness and truly merited praise and glorification of God is intended. In common usage the word *Hamd* has come to be applied exclusively to God.

رب (Lord). رب الشيء means, he gathered together the thing; he owned the thing. رب القوم means, he ruled over the people and administered their affairs. رب النعمة means, he increased and developed the favour. رب الامر means, he improved and completed the matter. رب الصبي means, he sustained and looked after the child till he was of age. رب means, lord, master or owner; one to whom obedience is due; one who reforms; one who sustains and develops (*Aqrab & Lisān*); one who brings to perfection by degrees (*Mufradāt*). رب also means, Creator (*Muḥīṭ*). When used in combination with some other word, the word may be used for others than God, as we say رب البيت *i.e.* the owner of the house (Lane).

العالم (worlds) is the plural of العالم which is derived from علم *i.e.* he knew. علم (alama) means, he put a mark or sign on it. العلم means, proper name by which a person or thing is known; flag or banner; sign; minaret. العالم primarily means, that by means of which one knows a thing. Hence, the word has come to be applied to all beings or things by means of which one is able to know the Creator (*Aqrab*). The word is applied not only to all kinds of created beings or things but also to their classes collectively, so that one says عالم الانس *i.e.* the

world of mankind, or عالم الحيوان *i.e.* the animal kingdom. The word *al-‘ālamīn* is not used to denote rational beings—men and angels—only. The Quran applies the word to all created things (26 : 24—29 & 41 : 10). Sometimes, of course, it is used in a restricted sense. Thus in 25 : 2 it is used in the sense of 'mankind' only and not in the sense of 'all created things.' In 2 : 123 it is used in a still more restricted sense, meaning not all mankind but only the people of the age.

In the verse under comment the word is used in its widest sense and signifies 'all that is besides Allah,' *i.e.*, both those that have life and those that have not, including heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, the stars, etc.

Commentary :

The believer is taught to say, *All praise belongs to Allah*, and not "I praise Allah" or "we praise Allah." The sentence الحمد لله (all praise belongs to Allah) denotes much more than احمد الله (I praise Allah), because man can praise God only according to his knowledge, but الحمد لله (all praise belongs to Allah) comprises not only the praise which man knows, but also the praise which he does not know, to be God's due. God is worthy of praise at all times, independently of man's imperfect knowledge or realization. Moreover, if the expression احمد الله (I praise Allah) had been used, it would have implied that man, a finite being, can completely comprehend the Infinite, an implication which is obviously wrong.

The word الحمد is an infinitive and as such can be interpreted both subjectively and objectively. Interpreted subjectively الحمد لله would mean that God alone has the right to bestow true praise. No other being is entitled to give such praise, owing to his limited knowledge. Interpreted objectively, it would signify that true praise is due to God alone. The praise due to other beings and objects is only borrowed and secondary. It is God Who provides everything

and grants all powers and capacities. Therefore, when a person or thing is praised, it is really God to Whom the praise belongs, the person or thing being entitled to it only secondarily.

The verse, *All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds*, conveys, among others, the following meanings :

(1) Allah is free from all blemishes and possesses all perfect attributes.

(2) He alone is fully aware of the real nature of all things. The truth of this statement is verified by the daily multiplying discoveries of science which go to prove how inadequate human knowledge ever remains.

(3) God can be entitled to "all praise" only when He is believed to be رب العالمين i.e. Lord of all the worlds ; and if He is Lord of all the worlds, then His providence must not only be universal but must extend to both the physical and the spiritual world. From the above it follows that no people must remain deprived of God's spiritual blessings and all must have their share. If, therefore, any revelation is meant for a particular people, other peoples must have separate revelations to guide them, as was the case in pre-Islamic times. On the contrary, if, at a certain time, separate revelations are not sent for different peoples and only one revelation is sent, that revelation must claim to be universal, affording equal opportunities to all peoples, as is the case in Islam ; otherwise God cannot be looked upon as "Lord of all the worlds", nor can He be considered to be entitled to "all praise." In fact, the belief that revelation is the privilege of any particular people to the exclusion of all others who cannot claim any share in it, is false and repugnant to God's universal providence as well as to His title to all praise.

(4) The powers and faculties with which man is endowed are all gifts of God. So it is He Who is deserving of praise for any good that may be done by man.

(5) By linking up the clause "all praise belongs to Allah" with the phrase "Lord of all the worlds" God has drawn our attention to the fact that one man's good is really linked up with, and dependent on, the good of all mankind. A true believer should, therefore, look not only to his own good but to the good of all. One who does not do so has failed to grasp the true spirit of Islam and the universality of God's providence. Happiness for one lies in happiness for all.

(6) The phrase رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) also points out that as things which grow, develop and change cannot do so by themselves, so all life is subject to God's lordship.

The phrase further points to a law of evolution in the world, that things undergo development and that this development is progressive and is brought about in stages, *Rabb* being One Who makes things grow and develop by stages.

The verse also points out that the principle of evolution is not inconsistent with belief in God. On the contrary, the progressive development of things makes creation all the more marvellous and God all the more deserving of praise. It must, however, be noted that the process of evolution referred to here is not identical with the theory of evolution as ordinarily understood ; the expression is used here only in a general sense.

(7) Again, the verse points to the fact that man has been created for unlimited progress, because the phrase رب العالمين implies that God develops everything from a lower to a higher stage and this can be only if beyond every stage there is another in a never-ending process.

(8) Finally, by putting the verse الحمد لله رب العالمين in the very beginning of the Qurān, a declaration is made that the time of separate revelations has come to an end, and that God is now going to bestow a universal revelation upon the world. When separate Prophets were raised

3. ^aThe Gracious, ^bthe Merciful,³

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

^a25:61; 26:6; 41:3; 55:2; 59:23. ^b33:44; 36:59.

for separate nations, ignorant people, not understanding the purpose of God, rejected the Prophets of other nations; but, with the advent of Islam, one Prophet and one religion were given to all mankind, and the different peoples inhabiting the world—white, yellow, brown and black—were all invited to sing one common hymn in praise of Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

3. Important Words:

For the meanings of the words *Al-Rahmān* and *Al-Rahīm* see note under 1:1.

Commentary:

In the verse *Bismillah* the attributes of *Al-Rahmān* and *Al-Rahīm* serve as a key to the meaning of the chapter at the head of which they have been placed. Their mention here in the third verse serves an additional purpose. Here they are used as a link between the attribute of رب العالمين which precedes and that of مالك يوم الدين which follows them. As we have seen, the phrase رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) also implies that after creating things God leads them progressively to higher stages of development. In the words الرحيم and الرحمن occurring in the present verse light is thrown on the process of that development. The word *Al-Rahmān* means that God provides not only all the necessary means, but also all the faculties needed for the development of man; and the word *Al-Rahīm* signifies that when man makes proper use of the means and faculties bestowed upon him, God not only rewards his labours but also inspires him with a desire for further good actions, thus opening out to him unending avenues of progress and development.

The attribute of *Al-Rahmān* rules out the doctrine of Atonement, because *Al-Rahmān* signifies that God can bestow unearned favours on His creatures, whereas the doctrine of Atonement is based on the belief that God is, as it were, bound to treat men only according to their merits. Islam teaches that God is bound by no such restrictions. He possesses the power to forgive sins and treat His servants as He likes, because, being *Al-Rahmān*, He can reward a person beyond his deserts.

The attribute of *Al-Rahīm*, on the other hand, rules out the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. This doctrine is born of the idea that actions of man in this life, being limited, cannot bring him everlasting salvation. The attribute of *Al-Rahīm* shows that by liberally rewarding man's labours, God creates in him the desire to repeat his good actions, repetition of good works resulting in a repetition of rewards and so on without end.

Misunderstanding arises from the fact that supporters of the doctrine of transmigration look upon Heaven as a place of inaction. To them salvation means *Nirvana* or cessation of all desire and action. This view the words رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) emphatically deny. The next life being also a creation of God, the attribute of *Rabb* will continue to operate in that life as well. Man's spiritual progress will not end with death. On the contrary, he will go on doing good works in the next life, and God, the *Al-Rahīm*, will continue to reward those works. Spiritual progress will therefore go on for ever. Only in the present life is there the possibility of dropping behind as well as of forging ahead; in the next there will be no dropping behind

4. "Master of the Day of Judgement."

مَلِكُ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

a7 : 157 ; 48 : 15. b51 : 13 ; 74 : 47 ; 82 : 18, 19 ; 83 : 7.

but only forging ahead. Effort and action and, therefore, progress will continue for ever. So the question about unlimited reward for limited action does not arise.

4. Important Words :

مالك (Master) is derived from ملك. They say ملك الشيء meaning, he owned the thing and possessed the right of doing with it what he liked. ملك القوم means, he gained complete dominion over the people. ملك (malak) which, according to some authorities, is derived from the same root, means 'an angel.' ملك (malik) means, king or ruler. مالك means, master or one who possesses the right of ownership over a thing and has the power to deal with it as one likes (Aqrab).

يوم (Day) means (1) time absolutely, whether day or night, short or long ; (2) day from sunrise till sunset ; (3) present time or now ; (4) أيام الله means, God's favours and punishments (Aqrab & Lane). The Quran says : *Verily a day with thy Lord is as a thousand years of what you reckon* (22 : 48). At another place (70 : 5) the Quran uses the word to indicate fifty thousand years. At yet another place the Quran says : *اليوم اكملت لكم دينكم* i.e. *Now have I perfected your religion for you* (5 : 4). Here اليوم simply means 'now.'

دين (Judgement) is derived from دان. They say دانه meaning, he rewarded or recompensed him ; he became his master and set him to any task he liked ; he judged him ; he obeyed him. دان بالاسلام means, he adopted Islam as his religion (Aqrab). Thus the word دين is used in several different senses, e.g., (1) recompense or requital ; (2) judgement or reckoning ; (3) dominion or government ; (4) obedience ; (5) religion (Lane). The word has been used

in the Quran in all these different senses: see 37 : 54 ; 24 : 3 ; 12 : 77 ; 5 : 4 ; 4 : 126.

Commentary :

Generally, this verse is understood to mean that God is the Master of the Day of Judgement. But it has a wider significance ; for although the last and the perfect reckoning will take place on the Day of Judgement, the process of requital is going on even in this life. In its wider significance, therefore, the verse would mean that God, Master of the Day of Judgement, is also Master of the period and process of reckoning in this life as well as in the next. There is, however, one difference. In this life human actions are often also judged and rewarded by other men—kings, rulers, superiors, etc.; and there is, therefore, always the possibility of error. On the Day of Judgement, however, the mastery of God will be exclusive and absolute and the work of requital will lie entirely in His hands. There will be no error, no undue punishments, nor undue rewards. It is to point out this difference, that, in spite of the fact that God is the Master of the time of requital, both in this world and the world to come, He has been spoken of in this verse as the Master of the Day of Judgement, so that it may be emphasized that on the Day of Judgement He will be the sole Master.

The use of the word مالك (Master) in the verse is also intended to point to the fact that God is not like a judge who is bound to give his judgement strictly in accordance with a prescribed law. But, being Master, He can forgive and show mercy wherever and in whatever manner He may like.

The use of the word "Master" thus serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it

encourages a person who has, in a moment of weakness, committed a sin, not to despair, because God, being his Master, has the power to forgive. On the other hand, it serves as a warning against taking undue advantage of God's mercy. For if as Master, God could and no doubt would, forgive, He would also hate to see His servants degraded by sin. God, the Master, inspires man both with hope and with fear, and this is essential for man's spiritual progress and development.

The four attributes of God *i.e.* (1) رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds); (2) الرحمن (Gracious); (3) الرحيم (Merciful) and (4) مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) mentioned in verses 2—4 are fundamental. The other attributes only explain and serve as a sort of commentary upon these four attributes, which are like four pillars on which the Throne of the Almighty rests.

The order in which these four attributes have been mentioned here throws light on how God manifests His attributes to men. It is obvious that the first divine attribute to manifest itself to man is that of رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) which means that, together with the creation of man, God creates the necessary environment for his spiritual progress and development. Next, the attribute of الرحمن (Gracious) comes into operation, and through this, God, so to speak, hands over to man the means and material required for his moral and spiritual advance. And when man has made proper use of the means thus granted to him, the attribute of الرحيم (Merciful) comes in to reward his works. Last of all, the attribute of مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) produces the final and collective results of man's labours; and the process finds consummation

in his being granted spiritual dominion over the world, such as is granted to the chosen ones of God. This is what may be called the descent of God towards man.

On the other hand, when man begins to ascend towards God, the process is reversed. In this process, man, first of all, becomes the manifestation of the attribute of مالك (Master); he begins to manifest in himself the attribute of عدل or justice, tempering it with mercy and forgiveness. Having developed in his person the attribute of مالك man reaches the second stage of spiritual progress where he becomes the manifestation of the attribute of الرحيم *i.e.* he begins to reward the actions of men liberally and generously. This is the stage which is termed احسان or beneficence. The next stage relates to the attribute of الرحمن. Here the sphere of man's beneficence becomes widened; his goodness extends to believers and unbelievers alike—he begins to treat them just as a mother treats her children, prompted only by a natural instinct and without hope of return. This stage has been termed ايتاء ذى القربى *i.e.* doing good to others as one would do to one's near relatives. Then comes the attribute of رب العالمين which marks the highest stage of man's spiritual development, when he becomes a manifestation of "Lord of all the worlds." At this stage man makes himself responsible for the welfare and guidance of the whole world. He is not satisfied if only he or those who immediately surround him are guided or otherwise provided, but desires the good of the whole world, and begins to use his God-given powers for the achievement of this great end. This is the philosophy of هبوط and صعود *i.e.* the process of Descent and Ascent which has been so beautifully described in these three short verses.

5. "Thee alone do we worship and
 bThee alone do we implore for help."

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

a11 : 3 ; 12 : 41 ; 16 : 37 ; 17 : 24 ; 41 : 38. b2 : 46, 154 ; 21 : 113.

5. Important Words :

نَعْبُدُ (we worship) is derived from عَبَدَ . We say عَبدَ الله meaning, he believed in the Oneness of God and served and obeyed Him with humility and submissiveness. عِبَادَةٌ which is the noun-infinitive from عَبَدَ signifies humility, submissiveness, obedience and service ; the idea is not of simple humility but of complete humility. It also implies belief in God's Oneness and declaration of it (Aqrab). عِبَادِيَّةٌ has the same meaning, but عِبَادَةٌ is more intensive and more extensive in its significance (Mufradāt). Another meaning of the word is to accept the impress of a thing. In Mufradāt we have طَرِيقٌ مَعْبُودٌ اِيْ مَذَالَلٍ i.e. a way is called مَعْبُودٌ when, on account of constant travelling, it becomes susceptible to the travellers' footprints. With reference to God the meaning would be "receiving the impress of His attributes." عَبْدٌ means, a man whether free or slave ; a male slave or a bondman (Aqrab) ; a servant or worshipper of God. عَبْدُ الطَّاغُوتِ means, one who serves or worships the devil (Lane).

Commentary :

True worship demands perfect humility and complete submissiveness, and this is not possible unless there is born in the heart of man a state agreeable to it. So a person can worship God in the real sense of the word only when acts of worship are performed with complete humility of heart.

It should, however, be noted that in Islam عِبَادَةٌ does not merely mean the performance of certain known acts of worship, e.g., Prayer, Fasting, etc. It has a much wider significance. In fact, the Holy Prophet of Islam is reported to have said that any act performed in obedience

to God's commands and to seek His pleasure is an act of 'ibādāt. Says the Holy Prophet : "If you give a morsel of food to your wife (believing that you are thereby obeying a behest of God), you will find the reward thereof with God" (Bukhārī).

In the verse the word نَعْبُدُ has been placed before the word نَسْتَعِينُ to signify that after man has become aware of God, his first impulse is to worship Him. The idea of invoking God's help comes after the impulse to worship. Man wishes to worship God but he finds that for doing so he needs God's help. That is why the word نَسْتَعِينُ is placed after the word نَعْبُدُ. Man should first make up his mind to worship God, then seek His help for carrying out this resolve.

The word إِيَّاكَ (Thee alone) has been placed before the words نَعْبُدُ and نَسْتَعِينُ to point to the fact that not only is God alone deserving of worship but that He alone can give the help which man needs to discharge this duty truly and effectively. As long as man is not granted the power and means necessary for his guidance, it is not possible for him to become God's عَبْدٌ or servant in the real sense of the word. No man-made law can make man a good and true servant of the Lord ; it is only God's help that can bring about this change in him.

The use of the plural number in نَعْبُدُ and نَسْتَعِينُ directs our attention to two very important points :

(1) that man is not alone in this world but is part and parcel of the society that surrounds him. He should, therefore, seek not to go alone but to carry others also with him on the path of God.

(2) that as long as a man does not reform his environment, his own reform cannot make him immune from danger; for a house surrounded by others on fire cannot enjoy security for long. Thus the use of the plural number points to a principle which is of vital importance for the moral, cultural and spiritual uplift of Muslims as well as for their success in missionary and other activities. The principle is a special feature of Islam and remains as important today as ever it was.

The verse also contains a hint about the eternal controversy whether man is free or predestined to follow a given course of action. Men of learning in all ages have disagreed upon this point, and no solution has yet been found. Some are of the opinion that man is the master of his will and is free to do what he likes, while others believe that freedom of action is an illusion and man only acts in a manner predestined for him. The verse offers an easy solution of this difficult problem.

The words *إياك نعبد* (Thee alone do we worship) which have been put by God in the mouth of man draw our attention to the fact that man is not determined but free to choose and carry out a course of action as he likes. On the other hand, the words *إياك نستعين* (Thee alone do we implore for help) remind us of the fact that, though free, we may yet suffer from constraints and compulsions of various kinds. The prayer, *Thee alone do we implore for help*, implies that God keeps a watch over our actions and takes steps to remove the constraints which keep us from the path He calls upon us to tread.

The Christian doctrine that man has inherited sin from Adam and therefore cannot get rid of it without Atonement is tantamount to the belief that man is not free but is bound to adopt a course predestined for him. Similarly, the Hindu doctrine of transmigration of souls is also a form of predestination. That man's state in the present life is the result of his

actions in a previous life only means that man is bound to follow the course to which he is pre-natally destined. Of modern thinkers, Freud, the famous Austrian psychologist, has also lent powerful support to this view. He has tried to show that the adult has his actions determined by the environment and experiences through which he passes in early childhood. Unable to shed the influence of his early days, the adult is not free. True, early environment exerts an influence on later life. The Holy Prophet of Islam, fourteen hundred years ago, drew attention to the fact that early environment exerts a distinct influence on the life of the human adult. Says he: "A child is born in the likeness of Islam; it is his parents that make him a Christian, a Jew or a Fire-worshipper" (Bukhārī). In spite of this, Islam repudiates the idea that man is not free. It is our daily experience that in later life man often outgrows the atmosphere and ideas of his childhood and adopts a course of life quite at variance with the sort of life he would have led if he had not outgrown those ideas.

There is yet another point to be cleared about this verse. God is spoken of in the first four verses of this chapter in the third person, but in this verse He is suddenly addressed in the second person. This abrupt change from the third to the second person may appear to be an example of bad grammar. Nothing of the kind. A thoughtful contemplation of the divine attributes in the first four verses brings to the mind of the worshipper such an attractive picture of his Creator that he feels irresistibly drawn towards Him, and this, coupled with the realization of His presence, makes him address his Lord and invoke His assistance in supplicatory tones. The Quran is no book of philosophy but has been sent to bring about a change in man and to open up to him avenues of spiritual progress. Therefore its style is made to fit in with the nature of man and with his innermost feelings. The contemplation of

6. Guide us in "the right path,"

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

19 : 37 ; 36 : 62 ; 42 : 53, 54.

the four attributes creates in man such an irresistible longing for his Creator and such an intense desire to offer his whole-hearted devotion to Him that, in order to satisfy this longing of the soul, the third person used in the first four verses has been changed to the second in the fifth verse. It is to this point that the Holy Prophet has beautifully alluded in the Ḥadīth. Says he: "Allah has divided the chapter *Al-Salāt* equally between man and Himself, the first half belongs to Allah, the second to His servant. When, therefore, a man offers this prayer to God from the fullness of his heart and asks for something, the same is given to him" (Muslim).

6. Important Words :

اهد (guide) is derived from هدى . هداه means, he guided him. هداه الى الطريق or هداه للطريق means, he showed him the right path and made it known to him. هدى فلانا means, he led the way for him. The word هدى is also sometimes used intransitively. They say هدى الرجل i.e. the man became rightly guided. The infinitive form الهدى is generally used in three different senses :

- (1) to show the right path,
- (2) to lead to the right path,
- (3) to make one follow the right path (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Baqā).

In the Quran, the word has been used in all these different senses. Thus, in the Quran we read :

(1) وهديناه النجدين i.e. We showed him the two highways of good and evil (90 : 11).

(2) والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا i.e. Those who strive in Our cause, We will assuredly lead them to Our ways (29 : 70).

(3) الحمد لله الذى هدانا لهذا i.e. All praise belongs to Allah Who has guided us to this (His Paradise), which means, He made us follow the right path till we reached Heaven (7 : 44).

In another place, the Quran says :

والذين اهتدوا زادهم هدى

meaning, those who accept His guidance, God increases them in guidance and leads them on to higher and higher stages of it, till they reach their destination (47 : 18).

صراط (path) is also written with س. It means a path which is even and can be trodden without difficulty (Mufradāt).

مستقيم (right) is derived from قام i.e. he stood up erect, or he stood still. استقام means, it became straight and even; it had the right direction. مستقيم therefore means, straight, undeviating and without any crookedness; right; rightly directed (Mufradāt & Lane).

Commentary :

The prayer taught in this short verse is so perfect and so comprehensive that it has no parallel in any other religion. In the first place, the verse teaches that paths are of two kinds : (1) even and straight, and (2) uneven and crooked, and the attention of a true believer is drawn to the fact that he should be ever on the look-out to take the straight path and reject the crooked one.

Again, sometimes a man is shown the right path but is not led up to it, or, if he is led up to it, he fails to stick to it and follow it to the end. The prayer embodied in this verse requires us not to be satisfied with being shown a path, or even with being led up to it, but ever to go on following it till we reach the destination.

7. The path of ^athose on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, those who have not ^bincurred Thy displeasure, and those who have not ^cgone astray.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ
الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

^a4:70; 5:21; 19:59. ^b2:62, 91; 3:113; 5:61, 79. ^c3:91; 5:78; 18:105.

Another aspect of this wonderful prayer is that it is not confined to things spiritual or to things of this world only, but covers the entire field of human requirements, both spiritual and temporal. This makes the prayer truly comprehensive. A Christian prays only for his "daily bread," but a Muslim is enjoined to make his prayer cover the entire field of his requirements, material or spiritual. Moreover, as hinted above, this prayer is not confined to man's present requirements but extends to his future requirements also. It is a wonderful prayer, which even a non-Muslim may use without contravening any of his religious views. In fact, many non-Muslims have used this prayer and benefited by its marvellous efficacy.

It has been objected that Muslims offer this prayer in their daily Prayers and their constant prayer for the right path shows that they have not yet found it. This objection springs from nothing but ignorance. As already explained, this verse teaches a Muslim to pray not only that God may show him the right path, nor merely that He may lead him to it but that He may enable him to go on till he reaches the goal. In fact, man needs God's help at every step and at every moment, and it is imperative that he should ever be offering to God the supplication embodied in the verse. Constant praying, therefore, is not only not objectionable but is even necessary. To say that the repetition of this comprehensive prayer is futile is simply absurd. As long as we have requirements unfulfilled and needs unsatisfied and goals unattained, we stand in need of this prayer; and what prayer can be more comprehensive and more pithy than this?

7. Important Words :

انعمت (Thou hast bestowed blessings) is derived from نعم which means, he became well off. نعم عيشه means, his life became happy and full of comfort and ease. انعم على فلان or فلان انعم means, he made his life comfortable; he bestowed favour on him. نعمة means, favour, blessing, anything which affords happiness (Aqrah). The word انعام is used with reference to rational beings only. For instance, we would say انعم على عبده i.e. he bestowed a favour on his slave or servant, and not انعم على فرسه i.e. he bestowed a favour on his horse (Mufradāt).

المغضوب (those who have incurred displeasure) is derived from غضب which means, he was angry, he showed anger. غضب عليه means, he was angry with him, he was wrathful against him, his anger and wrath being combined with the intention of punishing or retaliating (Aqrah & Mufradāt).

الضالين (those gone astray) is derived from ضل which means, he went astray, he lost his way, he deviated from the right path. ضل سعيه means, his effort was lost, being unsuccessful. ضل الرجل means, the man perished and his body became converted into dust (Aqrah). The word ضلالة is also used to indicate the state of being engrossed or lost in some effort or pursuit. Says the Quran :

الذين ضل سعيهم في الحياة الدنيا

i.e. those whose labour is all lost in search after things pertaining to the life of this world (18:105). Again : ووجدك ضالا فهدى i.e. and He (God) found thee engrossed in search (after Him), so He showed thee the way (93:8).

Commentary :

In the last verse, God taught us to pray for guidance to the right path. In the present verse the idea has been further advanced by adding the words, *the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*. This has been done with a twofold purpose :

(1) That a true believer should not be satisfied with only being guided to the right path or with performing certain acts of righteousness. He should set his goal higher, and try to attain to a position in which God begins to bestow His special favours on His servants. He should not merely pass the test but do well in it.

(2) That a true believer should look up to the historical examples of divine favours and receive encouragement from them. But he is not to stop at that. He should try to join the favoured company and become one of them. And as the topmost in a class is still one of the class, the goal set before a believer is very high indeed.

For a description of *الذين انعمت عليهم* i.e. the favoured ones, we read elsewhere in the Quran : *فالذين مع الذين انعم الله عليهم من النبيين والصديقين والشهداء والصالحين* i.e. *those who believe in God and follow the Prophet are among the favoured ones—the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous* (4 : 70).

Here the favoured ones have been divided into four classes, the topmost being the Prophets and the lowermost the righteous. Thus a Muslim has been enjoined to pray to God for the bestowal of such spiritual favours upon him as may enable him to belong to one of these favoured classes. Even the highest favours, pertaining to prophethood, are not denied to Muslims. This indeed is a lofty goal !

The point needs further elucidation. The verse, as hinted above, beautifully points out that a Muslim should not only desire mere virtue but should aim at inclusion in the class of men who have won the special favours of God. One who loves God does not remain

content with a low stage. Love of the Supreme Being engenders in the heart of man such a burning aspiration that he is not satisfied with an ordinary stage of progress. Indeed, one who understands God cannot look upon any stage of progress as final. Not only is the desire for unending progress found in the heart of the true believer, but God Himself wishes man not to remain content with a low stage, but to pray for ever-increasing righteousness, the righteousness of those who have won special prizes.

As already pointed out, the word *انعام* (favour) is not confined to any particular gift but includes everything which is given to a person as a token of pleasure, be it worldly or spiritual.

Again, though every favour is a divine blessing, it cannot be denied that there are certain favours which particularly deserve to be so called, for they rank among the topmost favours. The Quran says, *And remember when Moses said to his people, O my people, call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings and gave you what He gave not to any other among the peoples* (5 : 21). This verse pointedly refers to the things which can be held to be special favours for man ; and the Israelites are told that they have been given a goodly portion of all these favours.

Human excellences are of three kinds : (1) worldly and personal, (2) spiritual and personal, and (3) worldly or spiritual excellences in relation to others, i.e., excellences that are of a relative nature and consist in an individual or a people being superior to others. A man naturally likes to attain this last kind of excellence also, which confers upon him a superiority over his rivals and compatriots. In the verse quoted above (i.e. 5 : 21) Moses ascribes all these three kinds of favours to the Israelites :

(1) They received worldly favours, so much so that they remained rulers of a land for a

long time. All worldly excellences require kingship or government administration for their right growth and development, and a people who become rulers get this important means of development, irrespective of whether they benefit by it or not. The very fact that kingship is granted to a people means that all avenues of worldly progress are thrown open and made secure for them.

(2) They also received high spiritual favours. Just as kingship is a means of attaining worldly greatness and constitutes its culminating point, prophethood is the means of attaining spiritual greatness and constitutes the culminating point of spiritual progress. This is why Moses tells his people that prophethood, the greatest spiritual favour, has also been conferred upon them. Indeed they were granted this favour through a long series of Prophets.

(3) The third class of favours being relative, Moses most fittingly tells his people that God *gave you what He had not given to any other among the peoples*. In the above expression, though the idea is that of Moses, the words are Quranic and, as usual, the Quran has combined brevity of words with vastness of meaning in a manner which cannot fail to impress a thoughtful person.

The words, *the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*, coming after the words, *Guide us in the right path*, give great extensiveness to their significance. The words do not hold the object of a Muslim to be merely to pray that God may show him the right way. They direct him to pray for lofty objects and to implore God that He may not only show him the ways of guidance but that He may lead him to those special paths of spiritual knowledge which had been revealed to the favoured ones before him. By raising such high aspirations in the minds of the believer God has indeed conferred a great boon on Muslims.

Although in the presence of this clear and plain teaching it is not necessary to give any

further evidence to show that the doors to every kind of progress have been thrown open to believers, yet, as latter-day Muslims have generally given way to despair, it is necessary to turn to the Quran to see what it means by prayer for the grant of favours, and whether it holds out any promise of the acceptance of this prayer. As partly quoted above, we read in 4 : 67-70 : *And if they had done what they are exhorted to do, it would surely have been better for them, and conducive to greater strength, and then We would have surely given them a great reward from Ourselves, and We would have surely guided them in the right path. And whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger (of His), shall be among those on whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, namely, the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, and excellent companions are these*.

The above-quoted verse clearly speaks of the favours that are in store for true Muslims and uses the very words which occur in the verse under comment, viz., *the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*. As already noted, the receivers of blessings have been explained to mean *the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous*. This shows that the divine gifts which Muslims are asked to pray for embody the highest stages of spiritual progress, and the Quran informs us that all these stages are attainable, and indeed will be attained, by Muslims.

The objection is sometimes raised that prophethood being a *موهبة* i.e. a free gift and not a *كسب* i.e. something to be earned, it is meaningless to offer any prayer for its attainment. The answer to this objection is that a Muslim does not pray particularly for the gift of prophethood. He only prays in a general way and implores God to bestow the highest spiritual favours on Muslims, and it rests with God to confer His favours on whomsoever He likes. The Quran says, *Allah knows best where to place His*

message (6:125), i.e., He alone knows whom to make His Messenger. This is why God has taught this prayer in the plural number, saying *Guide us*, and not "Guide me"—to point out that prayer for such spiritual blessings should be general and not particular. Moreover, though it is true that prophethood is a free gift, yet it is not wholly so, for there is undoubtedly some element of "earning" in it, otherwise why was this gift conferred on Muhammad (on whom be peace) and not on Abū Jahl?

Another objection in this connection is that when the Holy Prophet has been declared to be خاتم النبيين (Seal of Prophets), there is no possibility of any Prophet appearing after him. This objection has also been clearly answered in the verses quoted above (4: 67—70); for there the words used are *whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger (of His)* which definitely means that the spiritual boons, including that of prophethood, promised to Muslims will be given only to such as will obey God and His Messenger, the Holy Prophet; and it is evident that the work of one who is subordinate to the Prophet cannot be considered as separate from his work, nor can such a one bring a new Law. Hence the appearance of a Prophet from among the followers of the Holy Prophet is not inconsistent with the latter's being the Seal of Prophets. On the contrary, such a Prophet will only complete the significance of خاتم النبيين. But of this we will speak later at its proper place. In short, the verse clearly tells us that the door of the highest spiritual blessings—even that of prophethood—is open to Muslims.

It should, however, be noted that "a favour" or "a blessing", spoken of in the verse, is not to be understood in the spiritual sense only. It covers the entire field of human activity, and in its wider significance the prayer includes the seeking of what may be called earthly eminence. Knowledge, honour, power, wealth

are all among the favours of God and a true believer may pray for the attainment of these along with spiritual blessings.

The latter portion of the verse contains a dreadful warning. Man receives favours from God and then begins to abuse them. Or he loses the right path, encounters a fall, and becomes rejected of God. It is to guard against this danger that the latter portion of the verse contains a warning for mankind in general and for Muslims in particular. God enjoins us to pray that after becoming His favoured ones, we should not incur His displeasure nor stray away from the right path, so that our progress, be it spiritual or temporal, may be continuous with no falling back.

The words المفضوب عليهم and الضالين have been used to denote two kinds of dangers. One is that one should outwardly stick to the right path but lose the inner spirit, retaining the shell without the kernel. The other is that one should lose the path itself and wander away into the wilderness. It is to these two kinds of dangers that the words المفضوب عليهم and الضالين refer. The Holy Prophet said:

i.e. By ان المفضوب عليهم اليهود والضاين هم النصارى are meant Jews, and by الضالين Christians (Tirmidhi & Musnad). These words of the Prophet are full of meaning. Not only do they describe the nature of the two dangers but warn Muslims that, if they are not watchful, they may fall a prey to them. They may either lose the spirit of faith just as the Jews did, who stuck to the letter of the Law but lost its spirit; or they may lose the path itself just as the Christians did, who strayed away from the true teachings of Jesus and began to tread a different path altogether. The Quran speaks of the wrath of God falling on the Jews time after time (2: 62; 2: 91; 3: 113; 5: 61). It also refers to the drifting away of the Christians from the real teaching of Jesus (5: 78).

The words الضالين and المغضوب عليهم also refer to another set of dangers. As is well known, the Holy Prophet had prophesied the re-coming of Jesus Christ which meant the coming of a Reformer, a Messiah, among Muslims in the spirit and power of Jesus. By using the words المغضوب عليهم, which, the Holy Prophet said, referred to the Jews, the Quran warns Muslims against meeting the fate of the Jews by rejecting the Promised Messiah when he appears among them. This prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

The other danger is alluded to in الضالين which, according to the Holy Prophet, refers to Christians. The verse foretells a time when Christian nations would dominate the world, and it warns Muslims to be on their guard against the false beliefs and evil culture of these nations. A most dreadful warning, but most deplorably neglected!

This, the last verse of *Al-Fātiḥa*, embodies yet another great prophecy. As we have seen, this chapter was revealed early in Mecca, when the Holy Prophet was surrounded by idolaters, and Islam had not yet come in contact with either Jews or Christians. Yet the prayer in this verse refers to the danger of Jews and Christians and not to the danger of idolatry. This unexpected omission in the case of idol-worshippers and this unexpected reference to the People of the Book is not without significance. Idol-worship was to be swept out of Arabia and was no longer to be a danger to Islam, but dangers far more formidable were to confront it in the Latter Days—the internal danger of Muslims becoming like Jews, and the external danger of their becoming Christians. The prophecy in this verse therefore has a three-fold significance: (1) it refers to the early extinction of idolatry from Arabia; (2) it speaks of the danger of Muslims drifting into a state like that of Jews, and (3) it alludes

to the universal ascendancy of Christian nations in the Latter Days, and warns Muslims against adopting their faith and imbibing their culture. All these prophecies have been literally fulfilled.

The Holy Prophet says that when a Muslim comes to the end of the prayer contained in *Al-Fātiḥa*, he should say آمين (Amen) i.e. Accept our prayer, O Lord! It is therefore customary with Muslims to say 'Amen' after reciting *Al-Fātiḥa*.

A General Note on the Chapter *Al-Fātiḥa*

Al-Fātiḥa, the opening *Sūra* of the Quran, reveals a beautiful order in the arrangement of its words and sentences. It is divided, as the Holy Prophet has said, into two halves. The first half pertains to God, the second to man, and the different parts of each portion correspond to one another in a most remarkable manner. Corresponding to the name الله (Allah), which stands for a Being possessing all noble attributes, in the first half, we have the words, *Thee alone do we worship*, in the second half. As soon as the devotee thinks of God as being free from all defects and possessing all perfect attributes, the cry of *Thee alone do we worship* spontaneously rises from the depths of his heart.

Again, corresponding to the attribute رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) in the first part, we have the words *Thee alone do we implore for help* in the second part. When a Muslim knows God to be the Lord i.e. the Creator and Sustainer of the worlds and the Source of all development, he at once takes shelter in Him, saying, *Thee alone do we implore for help*.

Again, corresponding to the attribute الرحمن (the Gracious i.e. the Giver of innumerable blessings, and the Liberal Provider of our needs) in the first part, we have the words *Guide us in the right path* in the second; for the greatest of the blessings provided for man is guidance which God provides for him by sending revelation through His Messengers.

Again, corresponding to the attribute الرحيم (the Merciful, i.e., the Giver of the best rewards for man's works) in the first part, we have the words *The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings* in the second, for it is *Al-Rahim* Who bestows merited blessings on His favoured servants.

Yet again, corresponding to مالک يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) in the first half, we have the concluding part of the last verse in the second, viz., *those who have not incurred Thy displeasure, and those who have not gone astray*. When man thinks of giving an account of his deeds, he dreads failure; so, pondering over the attribute of *Master of the Day of Judgement*, he begins to pray to God to be saved from His displeasure and from straying away from the right path.

Another special feature of the prayer contained in this chapter is that it appeals to the inner instincts of man in a perfectly natural manner. There are two fundamental motives in human nature which prompt submission, viz., love and fear. Some people are touched by love, while others are moved by fear. The motive of love is certainly nobler but there may be, indeed there are, men to whom love makes no appeal. They will only submit through fear. In *Al-Fātiha* an appeal has been made to both of these human motives.

First come those attributes of God which inspire love, i.e., الرب (the Creator and Sustainer of the world), الرحمن (the Gracious) and الرحيم (the Merciful). Then in their wake, as it were, comes the attribute of مالک يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) which reminds man that if he does not mend his ways and does not respond to love, he should prepare to give an account of his deeds before God. Thus the motive of fear is brought into play side by side with that of love. But as God's mercy far excels His anger, even the fourth attribute i.e. that of مالک يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement), which is the only fundamental

attribute designed to evoke fear, has not been left without a reference to mercy. In fact, here too God's mercy transcends His anger, for we are told that we are not appearing before a Judge but before a Master Who has the power to forgive and Who will punish only where punishment is absolutely necessary.

At the end of the prayer similarly the motives of hope and fear have been brought into play. First God appeals through the motive of love by putting into the mouth of the supplicant the words, *Guide us in the right path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*, and then He follows it up with the words, *Those who have not incurred Thy displeasure and those who have not gone astray*. Thus both the motives of hope and fear have been brought into action. But here too the first appeal is to the motive of love.

In short, *Al-Fātiha*, the Opening Chapter of the Quran, is a wonderful storehouse of spiritual knowledge. It is a short chapter of seven brief verses, but it is a mine of knowledge and wisdom. Aptly called the "Mother of the Book," it is the very essence of the Quran.

Beginning with the name of Allah, the Fountain-head of all blessings, the chapter goes on to narrate the four fundamental attributes of God i.e. (1) the Creator and Sustainer of the world; (2) the Gracious, Who provides for all the requirements of man even before he is born and without any effort on his part for them; (3) the Merciful, Who determines the best possible results of man's labour, and Who rewards him most liberally; and (4) Master of the Day of Judgement, before Whom all will have to stand to give an account of their actions, Who will punish the wicked but will not treat His creatures as a mere Judge but as a Master, tempering justice with mercy and Who is eager to forgive whenever forgiveness is calculated to bring about good results. This is the portrait of the God of Islam given in the

very beginning of the Quran—a God Whose power and dominion know no bounds and Whose mercy and beneficence have no limitations.

Then comes the declaration by man that, his God being the possessor of such lofty attributes, he is ready, nay eager, to worship Him and throw himself at His feet in complete submission; but God knows that man is weak and liable to err, so He mercifully exhorts His servant to seek His help at every step in his onward march and for every need that may confront him.

Finally comes a prayer—comprehensive and far-reaching—a prayer in which man

supplicates his Maker to lead him to the right path in all matters, spiritual or temporal, whether relating to his present or future needs. He prays to God that he may not only stand all trials but, like the chosen ones of God, do so with credit and become the recipient of His most bounteous favours; that he may for ever go on treading the right path, pressing on nearer and yet nearer to his Lord and Master without stumbling on the way, as did many of those who have gone before. This is the theme of the Opening Chapter of the Quran which is constantly repeated, in one form or another, in the main body of the Book which we are now approaching.



CHAPTER 2

AL - BAQARA

(Revealed after Hijra)

General Remarks

This, the longest chapter of the Quran, is known as *Al-Baqara*. The name was used by the Holy Prophet himself and is probably revealed. The *Sūra* was given this name probably because the word *Baqara* (Cow) symbolizes an important incident (related in this *Sūra*) in the life of the Jewish nation and points to the fact that nations decay and fall not only on account of *شرك جلي* (manifest *shirk*) but also on account of *شرك خفي* (hidden *shirk*) which being likely to be overlooked is, in a sense, more dangerous than the former and spells the spiritual ruin of a people that do not properly guard against it. The *Sūra* has another name also *i.e.* *الزهران* and both this *Sūra* and the one that follows, *viz.*, the *Āl 'Imrān* are jointly known as *الزهران i.e.* the two bright ones (Muslim). The Holy Prophet is reported to have once said: "Everything has its peak, and the peak of the Quran is *Al-Baqara*; and in this *Sūra* there is a verse which is the most eminent among the verses of the Quran and this is *Āyat al-Kursī*" (Tirmidhi). Again, "Whosoever shall recite ten verses of this chapter—the first four verses, the *Āyat al-Kursī*, along with the two verses which come after it, and the last three verses—Satan will not enter his house." This only means that these verses embody the essence of Islamic teaching, and that Satan cannot come near the man who faithfully acts on these teachings.

Date of Revelation

Al-Baqara was revealed at Medina. It began to be revealed in the first year of the Hijra and was completed only a short time before the death of the Holy Prophet.

Place of the *Sūra* in the Quran

It is sometimes asked why this chapter, which, as stated above, began to be revealed after the Hijra and was completed only a short time before the death of the Holy Prophet, was placed at the head of the Quran, second only to *Al-Fātiḥa*. The question forms part of the general question relating to the arrangement of the Quran and will be found discussed in the General Introduction to this Commentary. Here it should suffice to say that *Al-Baqara* has been placed next to *Al-Fātiḥa*, not because it is the longest, but because it deals with questions which at once confront a reader who turns from *Al-Fātiḥa* to a study of the main Book.

The literary merit of this *Sūra* is unparalleled. It is on record that Labīd bin Rabī'a, one of the seven outstanding Arab poets of pre-Islamic days, who later embraced Islam, was once asked by 'Umar, the Second Khalifa, to recite from his recent poetry. Upon this, Labīd began to recite *Al-Baqara*, and when asked about it, he only said, "How can I think of composing anything after God has taught me *Al-Baqara* and *Āl 'Imrān*" (Ghāba).

Subject-Matter

The subject-matter of this long chapter is epitomized in its 130th verse. This verse contains a prayer of the Prophet Abraham in which he implores God to raise a Prophet from among the Meccans who should (1) recite to them the Signs of God ; (2) give the world a perfect Book containing perfect laws ; (3) explain the wisdom underlying them ; and (4) lay down principles which should lead to a spiritual transformation in the people and make them a great and powerful nation. The four ends which Abraham prayed for are dealt with at length in this chapter, in the same order in which he prayed for them. The "Signs" are discussed in the beginning in vv. 1—168 ; then the "Book and Wisdom" in vv. 169—243 and lastly the "Means of National Progress" in vv. 244—287.

"The recitation of the Signs" refers to the arguments for the truth of the Holy Prophet's message. We are told, for instance, that he appeared in the fulness of time in fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. The Holy Prophet was no innovator. Messengers of God had appeared before, and Islam was only the culmination of the religious history of man. Accounts of the Prophets of Israel and the working of the law of nature have been cited in support of the Holy Prophet's claim. Unbelievers are warned that if they reject the Signs that have appeared in support of the Holy Prophet, it will lead to their own extinction.

"The teaching of the Book and Wisdom" refers to the laws of *shari'at* laid down in the chapter and to the wisdom or philosophy which underlies them. After a description of fundamentals like belief in God, the Last Day, the divine Revelations and the Prophets of God, we have ordinances about Prayer, Fasting and Pilgrimage, and then laws relating to marriage, divorce, the care of orphans and widows, the law of Inheritance, etc., along with the wisdom underlying these laws and ordinances.

Last of all, in elucidation of the subject of spiritual change spoken of in Abraham's prayer, the principles that lead to national awakening are briefly but effectively dealt with, and the lesson is brought home that no people could hope to live who are not always prepared to die for their ideals. The giving and taking of interest is denounced, as this practice not only kills the spirit of sacrifice and mutual co-operation, but also leads to war and helps to prolong it.

The *Sūra* ends with a moving prayer in which God's help is invoked by believers for the discharge of their great responsibilities.

Connection with Al-Fātiha

Al-Fātiha, though connected with all the other *Sūras*, is specially connected with *Al-Baqara*. The latter is the fulfilment of the prayer, *Guide us in the right path*, contained in the opening chapter of the Quran. Indeed *Al-Baqara*, with its discourses upon the Signs, the Book, the Wisdom and the Means of Purification, constitutes an appropriate and comprehensive reply to that great prayer.



1. In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.⁸

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

2. ^aAlif Lām Mīm.^{8a}

أَلِفٌ لَامٌ مِيمٌ ②

^a3:2; 7:2; 13:2; 29:2; 30:2; 31:2; 32:2.

8. Commentary :

See note under 1:1.

8A. Commentary :

Abbreviations like **الم** (Alif Lām Mīm) are known as **المقطّعات** (*Al-Muqatta'āt*) i.e. letters used and pronounced separately. They occur in the beginning of not less than 28 *Sūras*, and are made up of one or more, to a maximum of five, letters of the Arabic alphabet. The letters out of which these abbreviations are constituted are thirteen in number: *Alif, Lām, Mīm, Šād, Rā, Kāf, Hā, Yā, 'Ain, Tā, Sīn, Hā, and Qāf*. Of these *Qāf* occurs alone in the beginning of one *Sūra* only, the rest occur in combinations of two or more in the beginning of certain *Sūras*.

Of the meanings ascribed to *Muqatta'āt* two seem to be more authentic: (1) that each letter has a definite numerical value. Thus **ا** has the value of 1, **ب** of 2, **ج** of 3, **د** of 4, **هـ** of 5, and so on (Aqrab). This system was known to the early Arabs and is mentioned in some well-known books of tradition (e.g. Jarīr, i. 70 & 71). In numerical terms the letters **الم** (Alif Lām Mīm) would signify the length of time which the full manifestation of the inner significance of the *Sūra* was meant to take.

The letters **الم** have the numerical value of 71 (**ا** being 1, **ل** 30 and **م** 40). Thus the placing of Alif Lām Mīm in the beginning of the *Sūra* would mean that the subject-matter of *Al-Baqara* i.e. the special consolidation of early

Islam, would take 71 years to unfold itself completely. It is well known that this consolidation went on until the year 71 A.H., the year of the coming to power of Yazīd, son of Mu'āwiya, when the history of Islam took a different turn.

2. The second and much more important significance of the *Muqatta'āt* is that they are abbreviations for specific attributes of God and a *Sūra* before which the *Muqatta'āt* are placed is, in its subject-matter, connected with the divine attributes for which the *Muqatta'āt* stand. The Arabs used such abbreviations. Says an Arab poet :

بالخير خيرات و ان شرفا ولا اريد الشر الا ان تا

"I will certainly return good for good; but if you are bent on mischief, so will I. I do not contemplate mischief except that you yourself should desire it" (Jarīr). Here **تا** and **تا** stand for **فشر** and **نشاء** respectively. Similarly, the letters **الم** stand for **انا الله اعلم** i.e. "I am Allah, the All-Knowing"—a meaning which has the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, cousin of the Holy Prophet (Jarīr). Thus Alif Lām Mīm placed in the beginning of *Al-Baqara* indicate that the central theme of this chapter is divine knowledge. God proclaims, as it were, that Muslims, weak in the beginning, will soon become strong and attain to knowledge, wisdom and power.

The system of using *Muqatta'āt* was in vogue among the Arabs, who used them in

3. This is a perfect Book; ^athere is no doubt in it; ^bit is a guidance for the righteous, ^c

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ ۚ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

^a2 : 24 ; 10 : 38 ; 32 : 3 ; 41 : 43. ^b2 : 186 ; 3 : 139 ; 31 : 4.

their poems and conversations. In the modern West also the use of abbreviations has become very widespread. Nearly every dictionary provides a list of them along with their meanings. (For fuller discussion of the *Muqatta'at* see Tafsir Kabir by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, Qadian.

9. Important Words :

ذَٰلِكَ (this) is derived from ذَا meaning "this." The word is primarily used in the sense of "that," but it is also sometimes used in the sense of "this" (Aqrah). Here it is used to denote that the Book is, as it were, remote from the reader in eminence and loftiness of merit (Fath).

ال (perfect), like the definite article "the" in the English language, is used to denote a definite object known to the hearer or reader. In this sense the words ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ would mean, this is the Book, or this is that Book. The article ال is also used to denote a species in its totality or the properties of an individual in their totality. It is also used to denote the combination of all attributes in one individual, as one says زَيْدُ الرَّجُلِ (*Zaidu nir-rajulu*) i.e. Zaid is a perfect specimen of humanity. In this sense the words ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ would mean, this is a perfect Book, or this Book alone is perfect.

رَيْبَ (doubt) is derived from رَاى. They say رَاى meaning, he caused him uneasiness of mind, or he put him in doubt, etc. رَيْبَ means: (1) disquietude or uneasiness of mind; (2) doubt; (3) affliction or calamity and (4) evil opinion, false charge or calumny (Aqrah). The word has been used in the Quran at different

places; but in the sense of *doubt* it is always used in a bad sense. The Quran addresses disbelievers, saying: *If you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant* (2 : 24). Here رَيْبَ means "doubt" about a truth. The Holy Prophet says: "Give up that which creates رَيْبَ (doubt) in your mind in favour of that which does not create any doubt" (Musnad). Here again رَيْبَ is used in a bad sense. So the word رَيْبَ when used in the sense of "doubt", means such doubt as is based on prejudice or suspicion, and not the doubt which helps in research and the promotion of knowledge.

هُدًى (guidance), as explained under 1 : 6, signifies: (1) calling to, or showing, the right path; (2) leading up to the right path; and (3) making one follow the right path till one reaches one's goal or destination.

الْمُتَّقِينَ (the righteous) is derived from اتَّقَى which is derived from وَقَى. They say وَقَى i.e. he guarded or shielded him against evil, etc. اتَّقَى means, he was on his guard against, or he guarded himself against. اتَّقَى بِهِ means, he took it or him as a وَتَابَةً (shield) for himself (Aqrah). In religious language the word means, to guard oneself against sins or harmful things; or to take God as a shield for protection against sins. It is wrong, therefore, to translate the word as "fear", unless it is for want of a better word. اتَّقَى or اتَّقَى means, ever guarding oneself against sins. Ubayy bin Ka'b, a distinguished Companion of the Holy Prophet, aptly explains اتَّقَى by likening اتَّقَى to a man who walks through thorny bushes, taking every possible care that his clothes are not caught in, and torn by, the branches (Kathir). An Arab poet, Ibn

al-Mu'tazz, has expressed the same idea in the following beautiful verses :

خل الذنوب صغيرها و كبيرها ذاك التقى
واصنع كماش فوق ار ض الشوك يحذر ما يرى
لا تحقرن صغيرة ان الجبال من الحصى

i.e. "Avoid all sins both small and great—that is تقوى. And act like one who walks through a land full of thorny bushes, cautious of all things that one sees. Do not think lightly of small sins, for even big mountains are made up of tiny pebbles" (Kathīr). A *Muttaqī* (righteous person), therefore, is one who is ever on his guard against sins and takes God for his shield or shelter.

Commentary :

The clause ذاك الكتاب (this is a perfect Book) placed in the beginning of the verse, is capable of several interpretations, the following two being more in harmony with the Quranic text :

1. This is a complete and perfect Book, a Book which possesses all the excellences that a complete and perfect Book should possess.
2. This is that Book or this is the Book (which you prayed for, or which was promised to you).

Combined with the words لا ريب فيه the full clause ذاك الكتاب لا ريب فيه would mean that this Book is perfect in all respects and contains nothing of ريب in it, i.e., nothing that may make one's mind uneasy, nothing doubtful, nothing that may cause affliction, etc.

A Book claiming to be revealed and demanding acceptance in the presence of other Books which also claim divine origin must at the very outset make such a claim to set at rest the natural question as to what was the necessity of a new Book when already so many Books existed in the world. So the Quran, in the very beginning, asserts that of all Books it alone is perfect, satisfying human needs in a perfect manner.

The above claim of the Quran is capable of detailed substantiation. Briefly, however, it is

founded on the comprehensiveness of its teaching. The Quran deals clearly and adequately with all important questions such as God and His attributes, the origin, nature and purpose of man, his life here and hereafter. It instructs man in the regulation of his relations with God and his fellow-men in a manner unequalled by other religious Books. It also instructs parents and children, husbands and wives and other relatives in their duties. It teaches about wills and inheritance and about the rights of neighbours, employers and employees, rulers and ruled. Above all, it tells how man should conduct himself in relation to God and His Prophets. The other Books either do not teach about these matters at all or their treatment of them is very fragmentary.

The Quran also gives a very systematic account of morals—a subject on which the other Books say either little or nothing. In the Buddhist teaching we have a discussion of the basic instincts of man, but that discussion is very meagre compared with the account of the Quran. The Quran tells us about the roots of instincts, the ends which they serve and the use to which they may rightly be put. It also tells us how instincts become transformed into good or bad moral qualities, and how good qualities may be promoted and bad ones eradicated or discouraged. The Buddhist teaching inculcates the killing of desires but does not tell how bad desires arise and how they can be checked. The Quran teaches about the sources of sin and about the means of damming them.

Dealing with all these subjects in detail, the Quran is yet a book of very small dimensions, a fact which makes the reading, understanding and remembering of it a comparatively easy task. Thousands of persons know it completely by heart. The claim of the Quran that it is a perfect Book is, therefore, based on fact, and is appropriately made in the beginning of the text.

The second meaning of *ذلك الكتاب* (this is the Book) is that the prayer, *Guide us in the right path*, contained in *Al-Fātiḥa* meets with acceptance in this verse. Man prayed for guidance and guidance has come. "This is the Book" thus means, "this is the Book which contains the guidance prayed for in *Al-Fātiḥa*." The expression may also mean, "This is the Book which was promised to you."

The full meaning of *ذلك الكتاب* (this is a perfect Book) becomes clear when we read it together with the ensuing words *لا ريب فيه هدى للمتقين* i.e. this is a perfect Book; there is nothing of doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous. To a new message the first natural reaction is that of fear lest it should lead one into error or evil; the second reaction is the hope that the message may prove beneficial. Both these reactions—the first negative and the second positive—have thus been satisfied in this verse. The Quran is a perfect Book, because on the one hand there is nothing in the Quran to cause uneasiness or to create doubt or despair, and on the other, there is everything in it which can be a guidance for the God-fearing. Elsewhere in the Quran we read, *Aye! it is in the word of God (more literally, the remembrance of Allah) that hearts can find comfort* (13 : 29.)

The words, *there is no doubt in it*, do not mean that nobody will ever entertain any doubt about the Quran. The Quran itself refers to objections that disbelievers raised against it. The words, therefore, only mean that the teaching of the Quran is so rational that a right-thinking person who approaches it impartially cannot but accept it as a guide. Wherry and other Christian critics, thinking that the words, *there is no doubt in it*, have only one meaning, have jumped to the conclusion that the Holy Prophet must have been afraid of the doubtful nature of the Quran. These critics forget that this verse was revealed at Medina after a large part of the Quran had already been revealed. Disbelievers had

already raised many objections against it, and it was in reply to these objections that the words were revealed. The imputation of a guilty conscience is therefore utterly false. Assertion of truth and denial of doubt is common to other scriptures as well. In the Proverbs we read, "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them" (Pro. 8 : 8; see also Isa. 45 : 19; Tit. 3 : 8; 1. Tim. 4 : 9; Rev. 22 : 6).

Moreover, the word *ريب* does not mean a doubt which helps the investigation of truth but a doubt born of unfounded suspicion. Accordingly, the words *لا ريب فيه* would mean that there is nothing in the Quran which is based on doubt, i.e., everything is based on truth and certainty. The Quran asserts no doctrine or principle without also giving cogent reasons for it.

The word *ريب* also means, "affliction or calamity." The Quran contains nothing that may in any way cause misery or affliction to an individual or a people. It raised nations from the quagmire of moral degradation and social depravity to the highest pinnacles of worldly and spiritual glory. Little wonder they became convinced through experience that there was not a single commandment in it by acting upon which they could come to grief.

The word *ريب* is also used in the sense of "evil opinion or false charge or calumny." In this sense the clause would mean that the Quran contains nothing that may, in any way, lay a false charge against anyone. Indeed, the Quran seeks to usurp the right of no one, and it slanders nobody—neither God nor any revealed Book nor any Prophet.

It may seem strange, but is nevertheless true, that religious Books, such as the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, the Old and the New Testament, ascribe to God imperfections of one kind or

4. Who believe in "the unseen and observe Prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them; ¹⁰

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا
رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ^{١٠}

^a5: 95; 6: 104; 21: 50; 35: 19; 36: 12; 50: 34; 57: 26; 67: 13. ^b2: 44, 84, 111, 278; 5: 56; 8: 4; 9: 71; 20: 15; 27: 4; 30: 32; 31: 5; 73: 21. ^c2: 196, 255, 263, 268; 3: 93; 8: 4; 9: 34; 13: 23; 14: 32; 22: 36; 28: 55; 32: 17; 42: 39.

another. The Quran, on the contrary, declares Him free of all defects, the Most Perfect in Power, Majesty and Holiness. This point will be discussed in detail when we come to the relevant verses.

The word of God has also come in for much criticism. There is the school which holds the view that revelation is man's own mental response to the problems on which he reflects. Thus, certainty of faith, which comes of the *spoken* word of God, is denied to man, and there remains no distinction between man's own thoughts and those revealed by God. The Quran exonerates the revealed Books of different religions from the charge that they are not the spoken word of God but only a reflection of peculiarly sensitive individuals' own thoughts (4: 165). The Quran accepts the divine origin of the Books of other religions (3: 4; 35: 25).

The Prophets of God—Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna—also have been calumniated unknowingly by their own followers and knowingly by others. The Quran declares them all to be innocent. Belief in the sinlessness of Prophets is among the cardinal beliefs of Islam (6: 125). The Quran also proclaims their innocence individually (20: 116; 53: 38; 20: 23; 20: 88; 20: 91; 2: 103; 21: 92; 2: 88; 19: 14).

To sum up, the words لا ريب فيه would mean: (1) that the Quran contains nothing that may make one's mind uneasy; (2) that there is nothing doubtful in it; every teaching and every statement made in it is supported by arguments; (3) that it contains nothing that

may bring misery or affliction to an individual or a nation; and (4) that it contains no accusation against, or low opinion about, any object of faith.

The words هدى للمتقين (guidance for the righteous) bring before us the positive side of the Quran. The reader is told that the Quran contains not only nothing harmful but also positive good of the highest order. As explained above, guidance has three stages: (1) showing the right path; (2) leading one up to it; and (3) making one follow it till one reaches the goal. The words, *guidance for the righteous*, therefore, mean that guidance contained in the Quran is limitless, helping man to higher and still higher stages of perfection and making him more and more deserving of the favours of God. The ways and means by which a devotee attains to nearness to his Creator are infinite and unfold themselves one after another without end (29: 70). The process of the spiritual advance of man does not stop with death but continues in the life to come (66: 9).

The objection has been raised that, if the Quran guides only the righteous, what about those who have not attained righteousness? The objection is groundless. The Quran abounds in verses which prove that it is a guidance not only for the righteous but for all seekers, to whatever stage they may have attained (2: 22; 2: 186; 3: 139; 17: 42; 18: 55; 30: 59).

10. Important Words:

يؤمنون (who believe) is derived from امن i.e. he felt safe, or he placed his trust in.

آمنه means, he rendered him safe ; he trusted him. آمن به means, he believed him to be true, or he believed in him, or he trusted in him. آمن له means, he became submissive and obedient to him (Aqrab). Thus the word ايمان (belief) is the opposite of كفر (disbelief). It is particularly used with reference to God and other fundamental objects of faith.

الغيب (the unseen) is derived from غاب i.e. he or it became screened or invisible ; he went far away and became separated. Thus غيب means, anything unseen, anything invisible or hidden, anything absent or far away (Aqrab & Lane). All objects of faith—God, the Angels, the Books, the Prophets and the Last Day—are unseen. A revealed Book is visible as a book, but the fact that it is a revealed Book is unseen. Similarly, we see the Prophet as a human being, but the fact that he has a mission from God remains unseen. The word غيب however, is not confined to objects of faith only.

يقيمون (observe) is derived from اقام. They say اقام الشيء meaning, he set the thing up, or he set the thing erect or upright. اقام again is derived from قام meaning, he stood erect, or he stood up, or he stood still. اقام الصلوة means, he performed his Prayers regularly (Aqrab). اقام الصلوة also means, he performed Prayers in accordance with all the prescribed conditions (Mufradāt).

الصلوة (Prayer) is derived from صلى i.e. he prayed. The word gives different meanings with reference to different objects. Used about God, it means, He showed mercy to, or bestowed praise on ; used about the angels, it means, they asked forgiveness for men, etc. ; and used about man it means, he prayed. In Islam the word الصلوة has generally come to mean the prescribed form of Prayer (Aqrab).

رزقناهم (We have provided for them) is from رزق i.e. he provided or he gave. رزق means, a thing whereby one profits, or from which one derives an advantage ; any article of food ; any means of sustenance ; anything bestowed

by God on man, material or otherwise (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

ينفقون (they spend) is derived from نفق. They say نفق الشيء i.e. the thing became spent up or reduced. انفق means, he spent freely and constantly so as to reduce his wealth (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

In this verse three important qualities of a متقى (muttaqī) have been mentioned : (1) a believer in the unseen ; (2) steadfast in Prayer ; and (3) spending out of what God has provided for him. Of these the first relates to faith or belief which must always come first ; the other two relate to actions. Belief in the unseen does not mean blind belief or belief in things which cannot be grasped or understood. Nothing can be farther from the spirit of the Quran than to imagine that it demands from Muslims belief which reason and understanding do not support. The Quran strongly denounces such beliefs. True faith, according to it, is that which is supported by reason and argument (53:23 ; 46:5 ; 30:36 ; 6:149, 150 ; 25:74).

Moreover, the word غيب used in the Quran does not mean, as assumed by some hostile critics, imaginary and unreal things, but real and verified things, though unseen (49:19 ; 32:7). It is, therefore, wrong to suppose, as Wherry has done in his Commentary, that Islam forces upon its followers some mysteries of faith and invites them to believe in them blindly. It is Christianity which forces on its followers mysteries like Trinity in Unity and the Sonship of Jesus, completely beyond human understanding and human reason.

The word غيب as stated above, means things which, though beyond the comprehension of human senses, can nevertheless be proved by reason or experience. The supersensible need not necessarily be irrational. Nothing of "the unseen" which a Muslim is called upon to believe is outside the scope of reason. There

are many things in the world which, though unseen, are yet proved to exist by invincible arguments, and nobody can deny their existence. God cannot be perceived by the physical senses nor, for that matter, can angels or life after death. But can the existence of God and the angels be denied because of this? Can life after death be denied because it remains unseen?

The words, *who believe in the unseen*, may also mean that the Faithful discharge their duties and perform their acts of worship without a bargaining spirit. They are above such bargaining. They suffer hardships, undergo tribulations and make sacrifices not for the sake of any visible or immediate reward, but out of a selfless desire to serve the large and, as it were, invisible cause of community or country or humanity at large. This is all believing in the unseen.

Another meaning of the word *غيب* as given above, is the state of being hidden from the public eye. In this sense, the expression would mean that the faith of a true believer is ever firm and steadfast, whether he is in the company of other believers or is alone. The faith that needs constant watching and exhortation is not worth much. True and real faith has roots deep in the heart of the Faithful and lives by itself. It does not fail or falter when a Muslim is deprived of the company of other Muslims or even when surrounded by disbelievers. Such faith is described in 21 : 50 and 57 : 26.

The second quality of a *متقى* relates to actions. According to the different meanings of *اقام الصلوة* explained above, the expression, *observe Prayer*, would mean : 1. That a Muslim should observe Prayers throughout his life, keeping constant vigil over them. In fact, irregular Prayers are no prayers (70 : 35). 2. That he should say Prayers regularly at their appointed hours and in accordance with the rules prescribed for them (4 : 104). 3. That he should say his Prayers in a true spirit and not allow them to

be spoilt by wandering thoughts which may disturb and distract his attention (23 : 3). 4. That he should say his Prayers in congregation (2 : 44). 5. That he should also exhort others to say their Prayers regularly and thus help to spread the habit (20 : 133).

Prayer is not a form of bargaining with God, in which a Muslim looks for something in return. Islam strongly repudiates this idea and describes Prayers as a purifying agent for man himself. Through worship man attains to certainty of knowledge which dispels doubt and helps to establish a real and living contact between him and his Creator.

There is a tendency to condemn institutional worship as useless ceremonial. Worship, it is said, is an attitude of the mind and should be confined strictly to it. There is no doubt that attitudes belong to the mind and if the mind is corrupt, humility of the body can be of no avail. A person whose heart is unimpressed by the Majesty and Glory of God and who yet sings His praise is a hypocrite ; but so also is the person who claims to accept a certain truth, yet his body and behaviour show no signs of it. When a person is in love, his face betrays a peculiar emotion when the beloved appears before him. Parents fondle and kiss their children and friends express their affection by visible movements. These demonstrations of affection are spontaneous, not assumed. It is, therefore, impossible that a man should love God and entertain a true longing for Him, but should not seek to express this love or longing by some outward acts ; and this is the secret of all worship. Worship is the outer expression of the inner relationship of man to God. Moreover, God's favours surround the body as well as the soul. So perfect worship is only that in which body and soul both play their part. Without the two the true spirit of worship cannot be preserved, for though adoration by the heart is the substance and

adoration by the body only the shell, yet the substance cannot be preserved without the shell. If the shell is destroyed, the substance is bound to meet with a similar fate.

Besides other advantages, Prayers in congregation, such as Muslim Prayers always are, foster the spirit of brotherhood. Five times a day believers, both rich and poor, have to stand unceremoniously together, shoulder to shoulder, and offer their humble supplications to God. The busiest and the biggest of them have to find the time and join in this united act of worship. Such a fellowship cannot but react wholesomely on the worshippers' hearts.

Incidentally, it may also be remarked that the outward form of the Islamic Prayer includes all the poses of the body expressive of humility, i.e., standing with folded arms, bowing, prostrating, and sitting with folded knees, each pose being allotted a corresponding prayer. Besides the prescribed Prayers, one is free to pray in one's own words and one's own way.

The expression, *they spend out of what We have provided for them*, includes not only spending in the cause of Allah but also spending for the welfare of the individual and the community. The words used here are used in their widest possible sense. Wealth, power, influence, physical and intellectual capacities—in short, all that one may receive from God—must be devoted, partly at least, to the well-being of others.

The application of this injunction is not confined to the poor only. All those who have claims over the belongings of a Muslim are entitled to a share in them. The injunction applies to a mother who gives suck to her child, to a father who spends upon the education and upbringing of his children, to a husband who provides for the needs of his wife, and to the children who serve their parents. The com-

mandment is aptly explained in the famous ḥadīth: "Your self has a claim upon you, and your Lord has a claim upon you, and your guest has a claim upon you, and your family has a claim upon you. So you should give to every one his due" (Tirmidhī).

The verse, in short, lays down three directions and describes three stages for the spiritual well-being of man:—

1. A Muslim should believe in the truths which are hidden from his eyes and beyond his physical senses, for it is such a belief that can show him to be possessed of the right sort of *تقوى* or righteousness. An intelligent person does not remain satisfied with natural phenomena as he sees them, but looks deeper into their source and origin; and it is this delving into the depths of the unknown that leads to great knowledge and great achievement. All this comes under "belief in the unseen" which has special reference to God, Who is the source of all creation.

2. When the believer reflects on the creation of the universe and the marvellous order and design which exists in it and when, as a result of this reflection, he becomes convinced of the existence of the Creator, an irresistible longing to have a real and true union with Him takes hold of him. This finds consummation in *اقام الصلوة* or observance of Prayer.

3. Lastly, when the believer succeeds in establishing a living contact with his Creator, he feels an inward urge to serve his fellow-beings who, being the creatures of his own Lord and Master, are members of the large family to which he himself belongs. So, in order to meet their needs and requirements, he spends willingly and freely out of the wealth, knowledge or anything else which God has given him.

5. And who believe in that which has been ^arevealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and they have firm faith in ^bwhat is yet to come.¹¹

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ
قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ٥

^a2 : 137, 286 ; 3 : 200 ; 4 : 61, 136, 163 ; 5 : 60. ^b4 : 70 ; 7 : 36 ; 61 : 7 ; 62 : 4.

11. Important Words :

انزل (has been revealed) is derived from نزل which means, he descended ; or he came down. The literal meaning of the transitive form انزل would, therefore, be, he sent down, or he caused to descend. Figuratively, however, the word has come to be used about anything bestowed by God on man. God being high, everything that comes from Him may be said to descend from above. When used with reference to God's word, انزل would mean, He revealed. Thus we say, انزل الله كلامه in the sense of اوحى i.e. God revealed His word (Aqrab).

الآخرة (what is yet to come) is derived from اخر. They say اخره i.e. he put it back ; he put it behind ; he postponed it. The word الآخرة which is the feminine of الآخر i.e. the last one or the latter one, is used as an epithet or an adjective opposed to الاول i.e. the first one. الآخر, with a different vowel-point in the central letter, means, "the other" or "another" (Aqrab). The object which the adjective الآخرة in the verse qualifies is understood, most Commentators taking it to be الدار, the full expression thus being الدار الآخرة (the last abode). The context, however, shows that here the word understood is not الدار but الرسالة i.e. الرسالة الآخرة (the message or revelation which is to come). The word الآخرة has, therefore, been rightly translated here as "that (i.e. the revelation) which is yet to come."

يوقنون (they have firm faith) is derived from يقن which again is derived from يقن i.e. it

became clear and established. ايقن الامر means, he knew the matter well and made sure of it ; he was certain about it. يقن means, certainty ; becoming sure of a thing beyond doubt ; anything sure and established (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse describes three more qualities of a متقى i.e. a righteous person. In the previous verse mention was made of faith in general. But as a true believer seeks to know the details of تقوى (righteousness) in order to perfect his faith, he is told here that for its consummation he must believe in the Holy Prophet and through him in the previous Prophets, and must at the same time believe in "what is yet to come." Thus belief in the Holy Prophet is the central point so far as belief in the Prophets of God is concerned, and no person can become متقى (a truly righteous person) unless he believes in the Holy Prophet.

From the words, *that which has been revealed to thee*, quite an erroneous inference is sometimes drawn to the effect that it is belief in the Quran and not belief in the Holy Prophet that is enjoined. This view the Quran forcefully contradicts. Besides making it clear in several places that belief in the Prophet is as essential as belief in the Book (e.g. 2 : 286 ; 4 : 66 ; 4 : 137), the Quran makes the point clear in another way also. At one place we have, *He it is Who has sent down to you the Book clearly explained* (6 : 115), and at another, *and in like manner have We sent down the Book to thee* (O Prophet) (29 : 48). The fact that God

sometimes speaks of the Quran as having been sent to the people and sometimes to the Prophet is not without point. In fact, the difference in construction is full of meaning; for where the Quran is spoken of as having been sent to the people, the intention is to point out that the Quranic teaching is suitable and appropriate for them and is meant for their good; and where the Quran is spoken of as having been sent to the Prophet, the intention is to emphasize that he is not merely the bearer of a message but is the person best fitted to explain the message he has brought and to become an exemplar of the teaching contained in the message. Elsewhere God says, *Allah knows best where to place His message* (6:125), which is a clear proof of the fact that a Prophet is not merely the bearer of a message, but is selected by God for a higher purpose, *i.e.*, to become a model for his followers; otherwise, anybody can be sent as a bearer of a message and the question of special selection does not arise.

The words, *and that which was revealed before thee*, illustrate a special characteristic of Islam, *i.e.*, it not only recognizes the truth of all previous Prophets but makes it obligatory upon its followers to believe in the divine origin of the teachings they brought with them (see also 13:8; 35:25). But it must be remembered that Islam is a complete and final teaching which has superseded all previous teachings. Belief in them, therefore, is only in the sense of reverence for them and not in the sense that a Muslim should act upon them. That is why in the verse under comment God mentions the earlier scriptures after the Quran and not before it, as the chronological order required, so that the attention of the believers may be drawn to the fact that belief in the previous books is based on the Quran and is not independent of it.

According to the Quran (35:25), Prophets

have appeared among all peoples and all nations and we are commanded to believe in all previous revelations, and thus an effective step has been taken to promote peace and harmony among the followers of different religions. The verse applies to no particular Book. Any earlier Book which claims divine origin and has been accepted for a long time and by a large section of mankind to be the word of God falls within the meaning of this verse.

The word *الآخرة* (what is yet to come) means either "the message or revelation which is to follow" or "the Last Abode", *i.e.*, the next life. Of these two meanings the first is more applicable here; for it fits in with the other two parts of the verse which speak of God's revelations. In this connection it is also noteworthy that while the word *إيمان* has been used in reference to the past and present revelations, the word *يقين* has been used in reference to the future one. This is because *إيمان* relates to something definite and determined, and as the future revelation was not yet definite and determined at the time when the verse was revealed, so the word *يقين* was used for it.

The subject of the latter part of this verse, referred to in the words, *what is yet to come*, finds further exposition in 62:3, 4 where the Quran speaks of two advents of the Holy Prophet. His first advent took place among the Arabs in the 7th century of the Christian era when the Quran was revealed to him; and his second advent was to take place in the latter days of the world in the person of one of his followers who was to come in his spirit and power. This prophecy found its fulfilment in the person of Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, in whose advent have been fulfilled also the prophecies of other Prophets regarding the appearance of a World-Messenger in the Latter Days.

6. It is they who "follow the guidance of their Lord and it is they ^bwho shall prosper.¹²

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦﴾

7. Those who have disbelieved—"it being equal to them whether thou warn them or warn them not—they will not believe.¹³

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذِرْتَهُمْ أَمْ
لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧﴾

^a2 : 158 ; 31 : 6. ^b23 : 2 ; 28 : 68 ; 87 : 15 ; 91 : 10. ^c4 : 169, 170 ; 26 : 137 ; 36 : 11.

12. Important Words :

المفلحون (those who shall prosper) is derived from افلح *i.e.* he was successful and attained what he desired or sought. When we say زيد افلح we mean, Zaid reaped the fruits of his labour and his endeavours proved successful (Aqrab). Thus مفلح is one who is successful and attains what he desires and reaps the fruits of his labour. The word is also used about one who acquires any substantial good, be it material or spiritual, the word فلاح being used for such success or gain as others may envy (Tāj).

The word على in the clause اولئك على هدى is significant. If the idea had been of simple guidance, the Quran could easily have used the words اولئك هم المهتدون. But it leaves the common construction and uses the words على هدى which literally mean, they are on guidance or, in other words, they are mounted on guidance. Guidance becomes, as it were, a riding animal for them which they conveniently use in their march towards God. The construction is not peculiar to the Quran. The Arabs say of a person steeped in ignorance جعل القواية مركبا *i.e.* such a one has made error and ignorance a riding beast for himself (Kashshāf).

Commentary :

The verse explains that when a man has fulfilled all the conditions of تقوى (righteousness) in respect of both belief and actions, then he

may be sure not only of being rightly guided but also of being a master of guidance whose success in this life as well as in the life to come is assured. The words على هدى (lit. on guidance) also hint that as the believer prayed for guidance in the opening chapter of the Quran, so guidance of the highest order has been provided for him—a guidance on which he can ride comfortably and speed on happily towards his Lord and Master.

13. Important Words :

كفروا (they disbelieved) is derived from كفر which is the opposite of آمن and means, he disbelieved. The literal meaning of كفر (kufr) is ستر الشيء *i.e.* to cover up a thing. Thence it has also come to mean "ungratefulness" and "disbelief" (Aqrab). When the word is used singly, without any qualifying word, it means the rejection of any fundamental object of faith, *i.e.*, the unity of God or the prophethood of the Holy Prophet, or the Holy Book, etc. (Mufradāt).

انذر (whether thou warn them). انذر is derived from نذر. They say نذر بالشيء *i.e.* he knew the danger underlying the thing and was on his guard against it. انذر is the transitive form of نذر ; so انذره means, he warned him of a coming danger. نذير means, a warner (Aqrab). The همزة (hamza) used in the beginning of the word انذرهم does not give

8. Allah "has set a seal on their hearts and their ears, and over their eyes is a covering; and for them is a great punishment."¹⁴

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى
أَبْصَارِهِمْ غَشَاوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ٨

^a4 : 156 ; 6 : 26, 47 ; 7 : 102, 180 ; 10 : 75 ; 16 : 109 ; 45 : 24 ; 83 : 15.

the meaning of interrogation. It is simply used to make the word infinitive, and the clause beginning with it would be taken to mean, whether thou warn them or warn them not. It is a parenthetical clause which goes to qualify the words, *those who have disbelieved* (Mufradāt).

Commentary :

After speaking of the class of true believers and describing the high stage of faith, God now speaks of the extreme type of disbelievers who have become so indifferent to truth that it matters not whether they receive a warning or not. Of such disbelievers it has been declared that as long as their present condition continues, they will not believe. The verse does not at all mean that no disbeliever will henceforward believe. The idea is not only repugnant to the teaching of the Quran but is also opposed to all established facts of history; for people continued to embrace Islam even after this verse was revealed. Again, it was after this verse that the *Sūra an-Nūr* (Ch. 110) was revealed to the Holy Prophet, in which God spoke to him saying that people would soon begin to join Islam in very large numbers (110 : 3), and so it actually came to pass. In short, the words, *they will not believe*, refer only to such disbelievers as turn a deaf ear to the warnings of the Prophet, and to them also the words apply only so long as they do not change their present condition. A person who turns a deaf ear to a warning today but begins to heed it tomorrow does not, indeed cannot, come under the so-called ban.

14. Important Words :

خَتَمَ (set a seal) means, he set a seal on; or he stamped a thing so that there should remain no likelihood of its being regarded as forged. خَاتَم means, a seal (Aqrab). The expression خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قَلْبِهِ (lit. God has set a seal on his heart) means, God made his heart such that it could neither understand anything nor could anything come out of it, *i.e.*, it could not make itself understood by others (Baqa).

قُلُوبَ (hearts) is the plural of قَلْبَ which is derived from قَلَبَ (qalaba). They say قَلَبَ الشَّيْءَ *i.e.* he turned the thing; or he turned it upside down or inside out, etc. قَلْبَ means, the heart, or the central point of a thing. The word قَلْبَ is also used in the sense of عَقْلَ *i.e.* reason, as well as for such qualities as knowledge, courage and spirit (Aqrab). It also signifies the faculty of thinking and reasoning *i.e.* the mind (Lisān).

السَّمْعَ (the ears) is derived from سَمِعَ *i.e.* he heard. السَّمْعَ gives three different meanings : (1) the ear or ears ; (2) the sense of hearing ; (3) the sound which one hears (Aqrab).

أَبْصَارَ (eyes) is the plural of بَصَرَ (eye). They say بَصَرَ (baṣura) or بَصَرَ (baṣira) *i.e.* he saw, or he perceived, or he knew. بَصَرَ means : (1) the eye; (2) the sense of sight; and (3) knowledge (Aqrab).

عَذَابَ (punishment) is derived from عَذَبَ (adhaba). They say عَذَبَ الرَّجُلَ *i.e.* the man left off eating, owing to intense thirst. عَذَبَ فَلَانًا means, he kept back from it. عَذَبَ عَنْهُ means, he prevented him or deprived him. عَذَابَ الشَّرَابِ وَالطَّامِ means, the drink and food became good and tasteful. عَذَابَ الْمَاءِ means, the water became very dirty. عَذَبَهُ ('adhhabahū)

- R. 2. 9. And of the people there are some who say, "We believe in Allah and the Last Day;" while they are not believers at all.¹⁵

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝٩

^a2 : 178 ; 3 : 115 ; 4 : 40, 60 ; 6 : 93 ; 58 : 23.

means, he inflicted pain or punishment on him; he detained him; he prevented or deprived him (Aqrah). تعذيب means, inflicting pain or punishment; forcing a man to remain without food and sleep; depriving one of the sweetness or goodness of life; making life miserable (Mufradāt). Thus عذاب means, anything which is hard and painful for man and prevents him from attaining his object; pain inflicted as punishment in order to prevent one from repeating an act or prevent others from doing the same; the inflicting of such punishment; anything that deprives a person of the sweetness of life and makes life miserable; anything that prevents a man from attaining the object of his life (Aqrah & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

The verse refers to the disbelievers mentioned in the last verse and explains how they have reached their present woeful condition. It is common observation that organs which remain unused for a long time become dead and useless. The eyes lose their sight and the ears their hearing if they remain out of use, and the limbs become stunted for the same reason. The disbelievers mentioned here refused to employ their hearts and ears for the comprehension of the truth, and as a result their capacities for hearing and understanding were lost. It is thus only the natural consequence of wilful indifference which is described in the clause, *Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their ears, and over their eyes is a covering*. As all laws proceed from God, the final controller of the universe, and every cause is followed by its natural effect under His will, so the sealing of the hearts and the ears of dis-

believers is ascribed to Him. It is, therefore, a mistake to take the verse to mean that as God had Himself sealed up their hearts, so the disbelievers could not believe. The Quran contradicts this view and states clearly that it is the disbelievers themselves who seal their fate and God's seal follows only as a result of their action (see 4 : 156 ; 40 : 36 ; 47 : 25 ; 83 : 15). Says the Holy Prophet : "When a man commits a sin, a black spot is thereby formed on his heart. Then if he repents and gives up the sin and asks God's forgiveness, the black spot is washed off, leaving the heart clean. But if he repents not and commits another sin, another black spot is formed on his heart and so on, until his whole heart is covered with a black covering, and that is the covering of rust to which the Quran refers in *Sūra Taṭfīf*" (Jarīr).

It may also be noted that in the present verse the word "ears" has been put before the word "eyes." This is in conformity with the law of nature that the ears of a new-born baby begin to function earlier than the eyes.

15. Important Words :

آمن (we believe) is derived from امن for which see 2 : 4. The word ايمان (belief or faith) does not consist in a lip-profession of truth, or a vague realization of it. It combines three necessary elements, viz., (1) conviction of mind; (2) profession by tongue; and (3) demonstration through actions (Mufradāt). The Quran itself explains ايمان in this light (49 : 15 ; 27 : 15).

Commentary :

After describing the condition of believers (vv. 4-6) and that of disbelievers (vv. 7-8)

10. They "would deceive Allah and those who believe, but they deceive none but themselves; only they perceive not."¹⁶

يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ
إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ١٥

a4 : 143.

the Quran proceeds to describe the condition of a third group, the hypocrites. These were mixed up with the believers and posed as such. They were divided into two classes : (1) disbelievers at heart but united with the believers for the sake of some material or communal advantages; (2) believers at heart but lacking the strength of conviction necessary for thorough conversion and complete obedience. The reference here is to the first class of hypocrites, those who mixed with the believers but did not at heart believe in the truth of Islam.

It may be noted that only God and the Last Day are mentioned here, other Islamic beliefs being left out. This has led some to think that Islam requires belief only in God and the Last Day. The truth, however, is that 'God' and the 'Last Day' are respectively the first and the last items in the Islamic formula of faith and a profession of them *ipso facto* implies profession of the other items. Elsewhere the Quran clearly states how belief in the Last Day implies belief in angels as well as in the divine Books (6 : 93).

The omission may also be explained in another way. The hypocrites wanted to deceive the believers, so possibly they expressed themselves purposely in these words, omitting all reference to the Prophet and the Quran. By mentioning God and the Last Day they would induce believers to think that they subscribed fully to the Islamic faith, but in their hearts they made a reservation as regards belief in the Quran and the Prophet. This interpretation finds support in the following verse which says that the hypocrites wished to deceive the believers. The expression, *they are not believers at all*,

has been used to intensify the repudiation of the claim of the hypocrites to be believers. If a mere negation of their claim had been intended, it would have been expressed by some such expression as "they are hypocrites".

Strong denunciation of hypocrites is characteristic of the Quran (3 : 168 ; 5 : 42 & 5 : 62). According to the Quran, hypocrites are only disbelievers. This view of the Quran furnishes a strong refutation of the criticism that Islam permits the use of force in religious matters. Conversion by force can never be sincere, while the Quran insists upon sincerity in believers. A religion which makes sincerity a necessary quality of belief cannot tolerate, much less encourage, the use of force in religion.

16. Important Words :

يَخْدَعُونَ (would deceive) is derived from خادع (would deceive) is derived from خادع. They say خدعه i.e. he deceived him; he made a show of what he was not; he tried to harm him in a way unknown to the latter. خادع is sometimes loosely used to give the same meaning as خدع but really it is different. خادع is used when the deceiver is not successful in his attempt at deception and خدع is used when the party intended to be deceived actually falls a victim to the deception (Baqā & Aqrah). This distinction is corroborated by Lane who says, "One says of a man خادع when he has not attained his desire, and خدع when he has attained his desire." The word خادع also means : (1) he forsook or he abandoned ; (2) it (the market) was variable. They say سوق خادعة i.e. a market varying in its state, at one time brisk, at

another dull in respect of traffic (Lane). Following this signification *يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ* would mean: (1) they forsake and abandon God; and (2) they are variable with respect to Allah, believing at one time and disbelieving at another.

يَشْعُرُونَ (they perceive) is derived from *شعر*. They say *شعره* meaning, he perceived it; he came to know of it; he understood it; he felt it (Aqrab). *شعور* is the faculty of insight not depending upon the senses for its exercise, something that rises from within. In the verse the word *يَشْعُرُونَ* has been used to signify that though the disease of the hypocrites lies in their hearts, yet their insight gives them no warning.

Commentary :

The verse makes it clear that effective faith is based upon truth and sincerity. Faith not so based amounts to deception and God cannot be deceived.

The verse has given rise to some objections: 1. How can it be possible for any man to deceive God? 2. The word *يُخَادِعُونَ* is derived from the verb *خادع* in the measure of *مفاعلة* which denotes two parties mutually engaged in the same operation. The words *يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ* would, therefore, mean that hypocrites and God are both engaged in deceiving each other.

In answer to the first objection it may be said that the word used here is *خادع* and not *خدع*, the former, as explained above, signifying only an attempt at deception and not actual deception. The objection is, therefore, without foundation.

The second objection also does not hold good. The measure *مفاعلة* does not always carry the sense of mutual participation. Sometimes it signifies only one of the parties so engaged. For example, in the sentence *عاقبت اللص* meaning, "I punished the thief" the word *عاقبت* belongs to the measure of *مفاعلة*, yet here it does not

denote mutual participation in the act. It only means, I punished the thief.

A note on the hypocrites will not be out of place here. Before the coming of Islam into Medina there were in that city two pagan Arab tribes known as *Aus* and *Khazraj*, and three Jewish tribes named *Banū Quraiza*, *Banū Nadīr* and *Banū Qainuqā'*. The two pagan tribes were superior to the Jews in numbers but inferior to them in wealth and education. The Jews thus exercised great influence over the pagans of Medina. In order further to increase their influence, they encouraged internecine feuds among their idolatrous neighbours. A few years before the rise of Islam the pagan tribes of Medina, realizing how they had been duped, decided to organize themselves under a duly elected king. Their choice fell upon one 'Abdullah bin Ubayy, chief of the tribe of *Khazraj*, and they were preparing for his coronation when news came to them of the rise of Islam in Mecca. Events suddenly began to take a different turn. The idolatrous tribes of *Aus* and *Khazraj* became attracted towards Islam and began to embrace the new faith in large numbers, believing that the solution of their difficulties lay not in electing a king but in accepting Islam. Soon after the Holy Prophet emigrated to Medina.

The tide of enthusiasm became irresistible; and 'Abdullah bin Ubayy and his party felt it wise to follow their tribesmen into the new faith. They did not realize at the time that the establishment of Islam would mean the frustration of their own hopes. When, however, the power of Islam became established, they realized that they had put an end to their hopes. This realization destroyed any attachment they had for Islam. Instead, they developed actual hostility towards it. But as a preponderating majority of their tribesmen had already become zealous followers of Islam, they could not openly leave its fold. Thus came into being the hypocrites—a party

11. "In their hearts was a disease and Allah has increased their disease to them; and for them is a grievous punishment because they lied."¹⁷

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ ۖ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۚ بَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ۝

5: 53; 9: 125; 74: 32.

professing Islam outwardly but at heart hostile to it. Not strong enough to oppose Islam openly, they naturally thought of entering into a secret alliance with the Jews in order to injure the cause of Islam. In the beginning they had nothing to do with the Meccans for whom they bore a long-standing tribal antipathy. After the battle of Uhud, however, at the instigation of the Jews and prompted by their own jealousy, they forgot their enmity and began secretly to conspire with the Quraish of Mecca, keeping up a show of attachment for Islam. Their leader 'Abdullah continued to accompany the Holy Prophet in many of his expeditions.

In the Quran this party of hypocrites is mentioned in several places. Their last act of hostility towards Islam was their attempt, after the fall of Mecca, to conspire with the Byzantine Christian power. The occasion was the Tabūk expedition led by the Holy Prophet in the ninth year of Hijra. The attempt met with discomfiture. It was probably the shock of its failure that caused, only two months later, the death of 'Abdullah bin Ubayy. The party then broke up. Some of its members entered Islam sincerely; others ended their days in obscurity.

17. Important Words :

مرض (disease) is derived from مرض *i.e.* he fell ill; he lost his health. Thus مرض means, anything whereby a man loses his health (physical, moral or spiritual); disease or hypocrisy; doubt or darkness or loss; omission of any kind (Aqrab); any disease or any physical or moral weakness or defect of faith, in fact, anything that hinders

man's physical, moral or spiritual progress (Mufradāt).

يَكْذِبُونَ (they lie) is derived from كَذَبَ which means, he lied; he said what was untrue while he knew the truth; he gave a wrong account of something, whether intentionally or unintentionally; it (the heart or the eye) felt or perceived wrongly (Aqrab); he said what was true but said it insincerely, *i.e.*, he himself believed the thing to be untrue (the Quran 63: 2). كَذَبَ (*kadhhaba*) is the causative or transitive form from كَذَبَ. They say كَذَبَهُ *i.e.* he accused him of lying; he attributed falsehood to him in his claim or statement; he pronounced him a liar. كَذَبَهُ means, he rejected and disbelieved it. كَاذِبٌ means a liar, and كَذَابٌ means a great and habitual liar. كَذِبٌ (*kadhib*) and كَذَابٌ (*kidhdhāb*) mean, falsehood, lie, untruth; also the act of uttering a lie. كَذَابٌ also means the act of accusing one of lying (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary :

God speaks of two diseases of the heart : 1. كُفْرٌ *i.e.* disbelief; and (2) نِفَاقٌ *i.e.* hypocrisy. The former has already been referred to in verses 7 and 8. The present verse refers to the disease of hypocrisy and points out that those suffering from it do not act as normal, healthy persons do.

The Holy Prophet has mentioned the following signs of hypocrisy. Says he : "When a hypocrite speaks, he lies; and when he makes a promise, he does not fulfil it; and when he is entrusted with anything, he acts dishonestly; and when he makes a contract, he breaks it; and when he engages in a dispute, he uses foul words" (Bukhārī).

12. And when it is said to them :
 "Create not disorder in the earth," they
 say : 'We are only promoters of
 peace.'¹⁸

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا
 نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

^a2 : 28, 221.

In the verse under comment the increase of hypocrisy is attributed to God, not because God increases it but because the increase results from disregard of His commands ; also because it is God who finally dispenses the good and evil consequences of human actions. The Quran has only been revealed for healing diseases. Says Allah : *O mankind ! there has come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts* (10 : 58).

The increasing of disease also means that the expanding power of Islam was naturally increasing the disease of the hypocrites who were all the more forced to remain, against their will, in outward friendliness with the Muslims.

In the case of disbelievers the punishment mentioned is عذاب عظيم (great punishment), whereas in the case of hypocrites it is عذاب اليم (grievous punishment). This is because disbelievers express their disbelief and enmity openly, while hypocrites keep their feelings of hatred and malice concealed in their hearts, thinking that they are thereby deriving twofold pleasure—one of enmity towards Islam and the other of befooling the Muslims. So the retribution in store for the hypocrites is characterized by special pain and anguish—a fit recompense for their false pleasure.

18. Important Words :

تفسدوا (create disorder) is derived from فسد which is derived from فسد (fasūda) or فساد (fasada) i.e. he or it became corrupt or evil or vitiated or spoiled or tainted or in an altered state or in a disordered or disturbed condition,

etc. The word is the opposite of صلح. The transitive form افسد means, he or it made (it or him) bad or corrupt or vitiated or spoiled, or put (it or him) in a disordered or disturbed condition, or simply he created disorder, etc. The word is the opposite of اُصلح for which see below (Lane).

الارض (the earth) means : (1) the earth or the globe ; (2) part of the earth i.e. a land or country ; (3) ground or surface of the earth ; (4) floor ; (5) anything that is spread on the floor ; (6) anything that is low ; (7) shivering or tremor (Lane).

مصلحون (promoters of peace) is derived from اُصلح which is derived from صلح i.e. he or it became good or proper or righteous or in a state of order, etc. They say هذا الشيء يصلح لك i.e. this thing is suitable or fit or meet for you. اُصلح means, he or it made him or it good or proper or righteous, or put him or it in a state of order, etc. اُصلح also means, he corrected or reformed or improved ; or he promoted or brought about peace, harmony or reconciliation. It also means, he performed a good and right act (Lane).

Commentary :

The hypocrites tried to create disturbance in various ways : (1) they tried to sow discord among the Muslims themselves by instigating the مهاجرين i.e. Medinite Helpers against the انصار i.e. Meccan Refugees (63 : 8, 9) ; (2) sometimes they imputed motives to the Holy Prophet in the distribution of alms (9 : 58), or his system of gathering information (9 : 61) ; (3) sometimes they tried to undermine the spirit of the Muslims (9 : 50), or to demoralize them by spreading rumours (4 : 84) ; (4) sometimes

13. Beware! it is surely they who create disorder, but they do not perceive.¹⁹

14. And when it is said to them, 'Believe as *other* people have believed', they say: 'Shall we believe as the foolish people have believed?' Beware! it is surely they that are foolish but they do not know.²⁰

إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ
كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ إِنْ هُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

they encouraged non-Muslims to fight against Muslims (59 : 12).

In the present verse reference is made to the double-dealing of the hypocrites. Confronted with this the hypocrites invariably pleaded that they were prompted by nothing but sincerity of purpose and that their intention was not to create ill-will but to establish mutual cordiality and peace. This is the typical defence of all mischief-makers.

The presence of hypocrites and malcontents is inevitable in every organised society. In a society, not properly organised, it is easy for disaffected members to leave. But in a well organised community, the malcontents find it difficult to leave. So they remain within and carry on their nefarious activities secretly. The presence of hypocrites is not a sign of weakness but rather of strength in a community. But this should not make a community neglectful about them. On the contrary, it is imperative that malcontents and hypocrites should be closely watched and properly dealt with, as and when circumstances require. The Holy Prophet was ever watchful of this class.

19. Important Words :

وَلَا كُنْ (and but) is a combination of two words, وَ (and) and كُنْ (but). Ordinarily, only one of these words would have sufficed, but they have been used together to intensify the meaning.

Commentary :

In the last verse the hypocrites insinuated that it was not they but the main body of Muslims who caused disorder. The reply to this insinuation is given in the present verse in the emphatic words, *Beware! it is surely they who create disorder.*

The last words of the verse signify that the hypocrites lack the faculty of insight. If, instead of fabricating a defence for their duplicity, they had tried only to study their own mind, they could have easily perceived that it was not the desire of peace or reform but cowardice and jealousy that prompted their loathsome conduct.

20. Important Words :

سُفَهَاء (foolish people) which is the plural of سَفِيْهُ is derived from سَفِهَ i.e. he was or became light-witted or ignorant. The word سَفِيْهُ means : 1. simple or light-witted or foolish ; 2. ignorant ; 3. fickle and inconstant ; 4. weak in intelligence ; 5. one whose opinion is of no consequence ; 6. one who squanders away his wealth and property without consideration (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lisān).

يَعْلَمُونَ (they know) is derived from عَلِمَ i.e. he knew. عَلِمَهُ means : 1. he knew it or became acquainted with it ; 2. he knew it thoroughly so as to base his belief on it (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The verse means that when the believers asked the hypocrites to be sincere in their

15. And "when they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe'; but when they are alone with their ringleaders, they say, 'We are certainly with you; ^bwe are only mocking.'²¹

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَؤُونَ ١٥

^a2 : 77 ; 3 : 120 ; 5 : 62. ^b9 : 64, 65.

faith, the hypocrites would say that the believers were, like fools, squandering away their lives and property, a mere handful of men who had taken up the fight against the whole country.

The hypocrites called true Muslims "fools" because they thought they (the hypocrites) could protect their lives and property by maintaining friendly relations with the disbelievers, while the true Muslims, on account of their complete estrangement from disbelievers, were exposing their lives and possessions to constant danger. Muslims were also given to spending recklessly on religion. Such allegations are contained in 5:59; 8:50; 9:79 & 63:8. God replies to them by saying: *Their possessions and their children should not excite thy wonder; Allah only intends to punish them therewith in this world, that their souls may depart while they are disbelievers* (9:85). The verse means that soon the hypocrites would witness the ruin of their possessions, while Muslims would prosper. Success and prosperity come, not of cowardice and stinginess, but of courage and sacrifice, and the hypocrites were hopelessly lacking in both these qualities.

In fulfilment of this prophecy 'Abdullah bin Ubayy, the hypocrite leader, lived to see the frustration of his designs against Islam and his only son became a true and zealous Muslim.

21. Important Words :

خلوا (they are alone) is derived from خلا *i.e.* he was alone. They say خلا الرجل *i.e.* the man

was alone in a place. خلا المكان means, the house became empty and untenanted. خلا الشيء means, the thing passed away. خلا إليه or خلا به or خلا معه means, he was alone with him; he met him in private (Aqrab). خلا فلان means, he died (Lisān).

شياطين (ringleaders) is the plural of شيطان (satan) which is either derived from (1) شطن or (2) شاط (Mufradāt). شطن عنه means, he was or became distant or remote from him or it. شطن صاحبه means, he opposed his comrade and turned him from his intention or course (Aqrab). Derived from this root the word شيطان would mean, the being who is not only himself far from truth but also turns others away from it.

The other derivation is from شاط which means, he burnt; he perished. Derived from this root the word شيطان would mean, the being who burns with hate and anger and is lost.

In common usage the word شيطان means: (1) the wicked or evil spirit *i.e.* Satan; (2) anybody who greatly transgresses the proper limits and is excessively proud and rebellious; (3) serpent (Aqrab); (4) any blamable power or faculty or propensity like anger, etc. (Mufradāt); (5) any painful condition like excessive thirst, etc. (Lane). In its wider sense, the word has also come to be used about anything which is harmful and injurious and is likely to cause suffering.

استهزؤن (mocking) is derived from استهزاء which again is derived from هزأ, both having the same meaning. هزأ به and استهزأ به mean, he laughed at, or mocked or scoffed at, or derided

16. "Allah will punish their mockery, and will let them continue in their transgression, wandering blindly."²²

اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ
يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

^a9:79; 11:9; 21:42. ^b6:111; 7:187; 10:12.

him; he made light of him. هزأ also means, he died suddenly; he put it (camel, etc.) in motion. هزأ and هزوا are infinitive nouns from هزأ and mean: (1) mocking or scoffing or jesting, etc.; (2) object of mocking, etc. (Aqrab & Kashshāf).

Commentary :

The context of the verse makes it clear that by شياطين is here meant not evil spirits but rebellious ringleaders among the disbelievers and the hypocrites who were proud and haughty and ready to transgress all limits. Reference to such leaders has been made in 33:68 where God says, *And they (the people of Hell) will say, 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones and they led us astray from the way.'* These were the men who egged on the hypocrites to mischief and who were ever burning with jealousy and hate at seeing the Muslims prosper and who had gone far astray from the truth.

Some Christian writers have rendered the word شياطين in this verse as "satans" or "devils", and then charged the Quran with reviling idolaters, Jews and Christians. The charge is groundless; for, as already explained, the word شياطين does not here mean "satans" but simply proud and mischievous ringleaders. In fact, as shown above, the word شيطان has a very wide significance in Arabic. The Holy Prophet once said to his Companions, "A single rider is a *shaitān*, a pair of riders also is a pair of *shaitāns*, but three riders are a body of riders" (Dāwūd). The meaning here is that one rider is exposed to mischief and danger and so are two riders, but three riders travelling together form a safe company.

Christian critics, ever keen on finding fault with the Quran, forget the New Testament passages (Mark 8:33; 8:38 & Matt. 3:7; 23:33) where Jesus calls a disciple satan and his opponents serpents and a generation of vipers, etc.

This meaning of the word شياطين i.e. ringleaders from among disbelievers and hypocrites, is supported by eminent Muslim scholars like Ibn 'Abbās, Qatāda, Mujāhid, and 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd (Jarir).

22. Important Words :

يَسْتَهْزِئُ (will punish mockery). See 2:15 and also commentary below.

يَمُدُّ (He will let them continue) is derived from مَدَّ. They say مَدَّه meaning, he let him continue in a course, or he granted him a delay or respite. Literally مَدَّ means, he spread, or he stretched, or he made a thing extend (Aqrab).

طُغْيَانٍ (transgression) is derived from طَغَى which means, he exceeded the proper limits. طَغَى فُلَانٌ means, he was excessive in sin and transgression. طَغَى الْمَاءُ means, the water was in flood (Aqrab).

يَعْمَهُونَ (wandering blindly) is derived from عَمِيَ which means, he was or became confounded or perplexed and was unable to see his way, and went to and fro in confusion (Aqrab). عَمِيَ is like عَمِيَ; but whereas عَمِيَ is wider in its significance, being used for blindness both physical and mental, عَمِيَ is confined to mental blindness only (Kashshāf). عَمِيَ also means, it (the place) lost all marks or signs helpful for identification or for finding a way through it (Aqrab).

17. These are they who "have taken error in exchange for guidance; but their traffic has brought them no gain, nor are they rightly guided."²³

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبَّحَتْ تِجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

^{a2} : 87, 176 ; 3 : 178 ; 14 : 4 ; 16 : 108.

Commentary :

In this verse the word *يستهنى* (lit. will mock) has been used for God, and this has occasioned the criticism that the God of the Quran is given to mocking. The criticism is due to the utter ignorance of Arabic idiom and usage. In Arabic, punishment for an evil is sometimes denoted by the term used for the evil itself. For instance, in 42:41 we read *وجزاء سيئة سيئة مثلها* i.e. the penalty for an evil is an evil the like thereof, whereas the penalty of an evil is not an evil. Again in 2:195 the word *اعتداء* (transgression) is used for the punishment of transgression. Similarly, the well-known pre-Islamic Christian poet, 'Amr bin Kulthūm says :

الا لا يحجلن احد علينا فنجل فوق جهل الجاهلينا
"Beware! nobody should employ ignorance against us; or we will show greater ignorance in return;" i.e. we will severely avenge such ignorance (Mu'allaqāt).

Thus the expression *الله يستهنى بهم* does not mean, Allah shall mock at them, but that Allah will punish them for their mocking. The former meaning, followed by some translators, is absolutely inconsistent with the spirit of the Quran which condemns jest and ridicule as marks of ignorance (2:68). How, then, can God attribute to Himself what He declares to be a practice of the ignorant?

The clause, *Allah will let them continue in their transgression*, should not be understood to mean that God grants the hypocrites respite to let them increase in transgression. Such a meaning is contradicted by verses 6:111 and 35:38, where it is clearly stated that God

grants the disbelievers respite with the sole object of reforming them but they unfortunately only increase in transgression.

The word *يعمرون* (wandering blindly) is derived from the root *عم* which, as explained above, signifies, besides other meanings, the absence of signs or marks. The meaning here would, therefore, be that the hypocrites persist in their wickedness without care or consideration, as if the way they are travelling has lost all signs, leaving the traveller without any sense of distance or direction.

23. Important Words :

اشتروا (have taken in exchange) is derived from *اشترى* which again is derived from *شمرى* both having the same meaning, i.e., he purchased a thing or became owner of a thing by purchase. The word also sometimes gives the meaning of *باع* i.e. he sold a thing. The word *اشترى* is also used of a person who gives up one thing and lays hold on another (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The expression, *who have taken error in exchange for guidance*, means: (1) that they have given up guidance and taken error instead; or (2) that both guidance and error were offered to them but they preferred error and refused guidance. Both these meanings apply here. According to the first, the verse would mean that originally everybody is endowed with a pure nature and the best of capacities (30:31; 95:5), but, owing to wrong training or wrongdoing, the original nature and capacities become lost. In this case "guidance" would mean the nature or

18. Their case is like the case of a person who kindled a fire; and when it lighted up all around him, Allah took away their light and "left them in thick darkness; they see not."²⁴

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ
مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ
لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

^a6 : 40, 123 ; 24 : 41.

capacities with which every man is endowed by God, and "exchange" would mean that through making wrong use people lose the God-given guidance, landing themselves in error instead. According to the second meaning, the verse would signify that through His Messengers, God communicates to man only truth and guidance, whereas Satan presents to him his own evil teaching. Wrong choice by man results in his acceptance of error instead of guidance.

This traffic, however, brings the hypocrites no gain. They believe that by preferring the promptings of Satan to the guidance of God they would reap a good profit in this life. But, says God, they will reap no such profit. On the contrary, they will be the losers and suffer humiliation through their own wrong choice.

The words, *nor are they rightly guided*, point to yet another consequence of the wrong choice of hypocrites. They will not only suffer loss and humiliation in this life, but will also suffer punishment in the life to come, for being deprived of guidance they will not reach the goal. Thus the words, *their traffic has brought them no gain*, refer to the benefits that accrue to one in this life, and the words, *nor are they rightly guided*, refer to the end they will meet in the life to come.

The verse teaches an important truth. Every action of man is attended by two kinds of results, one immediate and the other deferred. A person who is detected in theft suffers punish-

ment and humiliation in this life. This is the immediate consequence of his action. The deferred consequence is that by the same action he reduces his ability to find and accept the truth and guidance. Similarly, when a person does a good deed, the immediate result is that he is pleased with himself and rises in the estimation of others. The deferred consequence is that he increases his power of finding and accepting the truth and guidance. It is the deferred consequences that are referred to in the expression, *nor are they rightly guided*.

24. Important Words :

مثل (case) gives a number of meanings : (1) likeness or similitude; (2) state or condition; (3) reason or argument; (4) proverb, etc. (Aqrab).

أضاء (it lighted up) is derived from ضاء i.e. it or he became bright or lit up. أضاء is used both transitively and intransitively. Used transitively it means, it lit up or lighted up (the surroundings, etc.), and used intransitively it means, it became bright or lit up. الضياء or الضوء means, light (Aqrab). In the verse under comment the word has been used transitively.

ظلمات (darkness or lit. darknesses), which is the plural of ظلمة i.e. darkness or absence of light, is derived from ظلم i.e. it became dark. The word ظلمة is also used figuratively to signify error or ignorance, just as the word هداية i.e. light is sometimes used to signify guidance (Aqrab). ظلمة also means, affliction, hardship and danger. In the verse the word ظلمات has been used in the plural

form in order to signify that the position or place spoken of is not only wanting in light, but is also full of various dangers. In the Quran the word is always used in the plural and denotes different kinds of darkness, physical, moral or spiritual. In the moral and spiritual sense the plural form also signifies that sins and evil deeds do not stand alone, but grow and multiply, one stumbling leading to another.

Commentary :

The verse speaks of hypocrites who were unbelievers at heart but outwardly formed part of the Muslim community. The light of the Holy Prophet or the light of Islam touched their outside, but owing to the diseased condition of their hearts it could not penetrate their inside, which is essential for true religious conversion; so they remained virtually deprived of that light. "The kindler of fire" in the verse can mean either: (1) the class of hypocrites who kindled a fire for themselves, *i.e.*, they accepted the light of Islam but when the light grew in intensity and lit up the surroundings, their hidden disease got the better of them and they lost the light and were left in utter darkness. In this case the Arabic text would read somewhat like this: *مثلهم كمثل الذين استوقدوا* *i.e.* their condition is like the condition of those who kindle a fire, etc. This reading would be quite correct according to Arabic idiom and the style of the Quran itself. Or, (2) it may mean the Holy Prophet of Islam who, under God's command, kindled a fire or a light but then the class of hypocrites came into being, whom the light touched but did not penetrate. Though apparently in light, they were really deprived of it, and owing to the disease of their heart their deprivation grew as the light increased. In this case the Arabic text would read somewhat like this: *مثلهم كمثل بعض اصحاب الذي استوقد* *i.e.* their condition is like the condition of some of those

surrounding a person who kindles a fire, etc. This reading is also correct according to the Arabic idiom. In either case the people deprived of light are the hypocrites.

By 'a fire' is meant, the light of divine teaching and heavenly Signs. This is corroborated by other passages in the Quran. In 28:30, 31 it is said that Moses saw a fire near Mount Sinai and, approaching it, he heard a voice, saying, *O Moses, verily I, even I, am Allah, the Lord of the worlds*. Elsewhere in the Quran divine revelation is compared to "fire" and it is stated that some human beings possessing extraordinary spiritual potency are near to being lit up even without divine revelation (24:36). Thus, according to the Quran, the word "fire" sometimes signifies the light of divine teaching and heavenly Signs, and in the present verse the word has been used in this very sense.

According to Arab usage, the word "fire" is sometimes also used for war. In 5:65 the Jews are said to have lighted the fire of war. In this sense, the verse would mean that hypocrites conspired with disbelievers to wage war against Islam. But the war only served to increase the power of Islam, leaving the hypocrites utterly confounded.

The words, *Allah took away their light*, may mean that the wars tore away from the hypocrites the bright mantle of Islam with which they had disguised themselves. The wars not only failed to bring the expected victory to the disbelievers, but also helped to expose the hypocrites who betrayed themselves by failing to join up with the Muslims and to share the perils of the wars with them. The gradual extension and elaboration of the teachings of Islam also helped the exposure. The more commands there were to obey, the more burdensome did obedience prove to the hypocrites.

The expression, *left them in thick darkness; they see not*, means that the hypocrites had

19. *They are "deaf, dumb and blind ;
so they will not return."*²⁵

صُمُّكُمْ عَنِ نَهْمِهِمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

"2 : 172; 6 : 40; 7 : 180; 8 : 23; 10 : 43; 11 : 25; 17 : 98; 21 : 46; 27 : 81; 30 : 53, 54; 43 : 41.

fomented the wars in order to re-establish their influence but the actual result of these wars was the exposure of their hypocrisy and their consequent confusion and perplexity.

If the word "fire" means the light of Islam, the verse would signify that though the light of Islam touched the hypocrites on the outside, yet their hearts remained unaffected by it. God deprived them not only of the light of revelation with all its blessings but also of the light of conscience which He has implanted in the nature of man.

25. Important Words :

صَمٌّ (deaf persons) which is the plural of صَمٌّ (a deaf man) is derived from صَمَّمَ. They say صَمَّمَ الْقَارُورَةَ i.e. he put a stopper into the mouth of the bottle. صَمَّمَ means, his ear became closed up, or he became deaf, or he had a heaviness of hearing. صَمَّمَ means, one who has a stoppage of the ear and heaviness of hearing. رَجُلٌ صَمٌّ also means, a man whom one does not hope to win over and who will not be turned back from the object of his desire. The word also signifies one who persists in his evil course (Aqrab).

بَكْمٌ (dumb persons) which is the plural of بَكْمٌ (a dumb man) is derived from بَكَّمَ (bakima) i.e. he became dumb. بَكَّمَ (bakuma) means, he kept silent intentionally. بَكَّمَ means, one who is dumb either by natural conformation or from inability to express himself; or, one not

having ability to find words, though possessing the faculty of speech (Tāj).

أَعْمَى (blind persons) which is the plural of أَعْمَى (a blind person) is derived from أَعْمَى i.e. he became totally blind. أَعْمَى means, one physically blind of both eyes; or one blind in respect of mental vision (Aqrab). See also 2 : 16.

Commentary :

The verse aptly describes the mental condition of the class of hypocrites mentioned in the previous verse. The first cause of their going astray was that they had turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of the Prophet. Secondly, they did not give straightforward expression to their doubts to have them dispelled. Exaggerated pride and self-esteem prevented them from asking questions. Lastly, they had become insensitive to the progress Islam was making and the change it had effected in its followers. As they made no use of their ears, their tongues and their eyes, they are spoken of as deaf, dumb and blind.

The words, *they will not return*, point to an important truth. Man is born with a pure nature—the nature of Islam—and it is only by his evil deeds that he corrupts himself. So the words, *they will not return*, allude to the fact that these men have strayed away from their original good nature, and though God is calling them back to the pristine purity of their nature, they will not return.

20. Or *it* is like a heavy rain from the clouds, "wherein is thick darkness and thunder and lightning ; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder-claps for fear of death, and Allah encompasses the disbelievers."²⁶

أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ
يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ
الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُخِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

^a6 : 40, 123 ; 24 : 41. ^b13 : 13 ; 24 : 44 ; 30 : 25.

26. Important Words :

أو (or) is a conjunction signifying several meanings. Here it is used in the sense of "or." It does not, however, denote doubt but simply indicates the presentation of an alternative similitude.

صَيِّب (heavy rain) is derived from صاب which means, it came down ; it descended ; or it poured forth. The word صَيِّب means, clouds pouring down heavy rain ; or heavy rain itself (Lane).

السَّاء (the clouds) is derived from ماما i.e. he or it became high or towering. Thus السَّاء means, anything that hangs high over your head and covers you in its shade ; the sky ; any canopy, ceiling or roof ; a cloud (Aqrab).

رَعْد (thunder). رَعْد السحاب means, the cloud thundered. رَعْد لى فلان means, he threatened me. رَعْد therefore means, thunder of clouds ; or thunder of war, etc. In the present verse it is used figuratively, meaning, weighty commands ; or prophecies relating to coming disasters ; or injunctions relating to war, etc.

الْبَرْق (lightning) is derived from بَرَق i.e. it shone or gave out light. بَرَق السَّاء means, the sky shone with lightning. بَرَق الشَّيْء means, the thing shone with light. الْبَرْق therefore means, lightning or gleaming in the clouds (Aqrab). In this verse it is used figuratively, meaning, victories in wars ; or spoils of war ; or clear signs of truth, etc.

الصَّوَاعِق (thunder-claps) is the plural of الصَّاعِقَة (a thunder-clap) which is derived from صَق

صَعَتِ السَّاء (sa'iqā) or صَق (ṣa'qa). They say صَعَتِ السَّاء i.e. the sky hit the people with lightning. صَعَق الرِّجْل means, the thunder grew louder. صَعَق الرِّجْل means, the man fell down in a swoon ; he died ; he lost the power of thinking owing to some great and sudden noise accompanying a calamity. الصَّاعِقَة means : (1) lightning that descends from the thundering clouds and burns what it smites ; (2) any destructive calamity or punishment ; (3) death and destruction ; (4) noise or report accompanying a divine punishment like an earthquake, etc. ; (5) swoon and unconsciousness (Aqrab & Lane).

الموت (death) is from مات i.e. he died (in various senses) ; he became as if dead ; he slept. موت is the opposite of حَيَاة (life) and means, death or lifelessness. Like life, death is also of several kinds : (1) Stoppage of the power of growth (50 : 12). (2) Deprivation of sensation or consciousness (19 : 24). (3) Deprivation of the faculty of intellect and understanding (6:123). (4) To be, as though, dead with grief or sorrow or fear (14:18). (5) Spiritual death (3 : 170). (6) Sleep, which the Arabs call a light sort of death (Mufradāt). (7) Stillness or motionlessness. (8) Being reduced to poverty. (9) Becoming worn out. (10) Becoming base, abject, vile and despicable. (11) Becoming destitute of cultivation or of inhabitants (Lane). According to Lisān موت (death) also signifies any painful condition such as poverty, humiliation, dotage, sinfulness, etc.

Commentary :

This verse refers to the second class of hypocrites, viz., those who, though not quite insincere in their belief, were yet weak in their faith and practice and became upset whenever there was a threat of attack by the enemy or whenever a situation arose demanding some sacrifice. These people feared the oppression of men more than the punishment of God, and tried to maintain good relations with disbelievers by secret correspondence and by supplying information about the believers. They consoled themselves with the thought that as Islam was a true religion from God, its victory was assured in spite of anything they might do, and hence it was not proper for them to expose themselves to unnecessary danger.

Islam has no place even for such weaklings. It is a religion of action and sacrifice. That is why, in the very beginning of the Quran, such people have been plainly told that God reckons them among the hypocrites and will deal with them accordingly. Islam teaches us not to spare any sacrifice to win the pleasure of God and one who is not prepared for such a complete sacrifice will not deserve the reward promised to Islam and Muslims.

This and the preceding verses refer to two classes of hypocrites: (1) disbelievers who posed as Muslims, and (2) believers bad in faith and worse in works—with leanings towards disbelievers. This is proved by the following considerations: (a) In verse 18 it is said that the hypocrites kindled a fire, but in the present verse there is no mention of the hypocrites kindling a fire. On the contrary, mention is made of signs or trials coming from Heaven. (b) In the first simile it was said that when the fire illuminated its surroundings, the hypocrites were bereft of their sight. In the second simile embodied in vv. 20 & 21 it is said that when there is light, the people take advantage of it and begin to move. (c) In the first simile it was said that the people

referred to were not believers. They were deaf, dumb and blind. But in the second simile it is only said that if God willed He would make these people deaf and blind, implying that they were not so already but would become so, if they continued to pursue the course they had adopted. (d) The men in the first simile were said to be plotting against Islam and Muslims, whereas those in the second simile are not spoken of as plotting against Muslims, but simply as leaving them alone in times of danger. All these facts indicate that these verses refer to two separate classes of hypocrites and this is why the word **ار** (or) has been placed between the two verses. They are two separate classes and not the same class.

The purport of the present verse is that the condition of the latter class of hypocrites is like that of those timorous people who, at a mere shower of rain with thunder and lightning, become timid and fail to benefit from the rain. Similarly, the coming of Islam is accompanied by trials and hardships. The true believer knows that these too have a purpose and is not upset. The trials serve only to increase his zeal.

Objection is sometimes taken against Prophets on the ground that their advent produces disorder and disunion in the earth. The verse provides an answer to this objection by pointing out that just as rain, which gives life to the earth, is accompanied by darkness and thunder and a temporary screening of the sun, even so the trials which accompany the advent of Prophets only presage the dawning of a new era in even greater splendour and effulgence.

The word **ساعة** (thunder-clap) is spoken of in the verse as making the hypocrites fearful of death. The verse suggests that such a fear is unreasonable because the thunder-clap which makes these people afraid comes after the lightning has actually struck. To slip one's fingers into one's ears can therefore serve no purpose. A state of war already

21. The lightning might well-nigh snatch away their sight; whenever it shines upon them, they walk therein; and "when it becomes dark to them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight; surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.²⁷

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ٢١

a4 : 73, 74.

exists between believers and disbelievers and this must entail some suffering and hardship. It is no use for the hypocrites to try to escape the implications and consequences of war.

The words, *Allah encompasses the disbelievers*, at the end of the verse point to the unreasonableness of the fear entertained by the hypocrites. Since God has already decreed the defeat and destruction of the disbelievers, the hypocrites need have no fear of any serious harm from them.

27. Important Words :

يَخْطَفُ (snatch away) is derived from خَطَفَ meaning, he seized a thing quickly; he snatched it away. خَطَفَ الْبَرْقُ الْبَصَرَ means, the lightning snatched away the sight (Aqrah).

شَيْئٍ (thing or what one wills) is infinitive from شاء i.e. he willed or he intended. The word شَيْئٍ is ordinarily translated as, a thing or anything or something; but as in Arabic the infinitive is sometimes used to give the meaning of a passive participle, the word may also be translated as, what is willed or intended or something that one wills or intends.

قَدِيرٌ (has the power) is derived from قَدَرَ. They say قَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ i.e. he had the power to do it; or he possessed power over him or it. قَادِرٌ means, powerful, possessing power over, or possessing power to do. قَدِيرٌ is the intensive form of قَادِرٌ and means, very powerful, most powerful, having or possessing full power.

Commentary :

The verse purports to say that these hypocrites—the hypocrites described as weak believers—are very near to losing their sight. They have not actually lost it, but if they are repeatedly confronted with situations demanding courage and sacrifice symbolized by lightning and thunder, they are very likely to lose their faith. But the mercy of God has so ordained that lightning is not always accompanied by a thunder-bolt. Often it is only a brilliant flash, which lifts the veil of darkness and helps the wayfarer to move on. In this case it symbolizes the dazzling power of Islam. On such occasions these hypocrites make common cause with the Muslims. But when lightning is accompanied by thunder i.e. when the situation demands sacrifice of life or property, the world becomes dark to the hypocrites; they become dumb-founded and stand still, refusing to move on with the Faithful.

The words, *and if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight*, indicate that the hypocrites referred to here had not till then been deprived of their hearing or sight. It was still open to them to submit to the teaching of the Quran completely and to accept the leadership of the Prophet in all sincerity. If, however, they continued in their present course and did not stop deserting the Muslims in difficult times, they would soon cease to have any connection with Islam and the Muslims—they would lose all sight and all hearing.

22. O ye men, "worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you, that you may become righteous ;²³

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

^a4 : 2, 37 ; 5 : 73, 118 ; 16 : 37 ; 22 : 78 ; 51 : 57.

The words, *surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills*, imply that the fear of the hypocrites lest they should come to harm at the hands of disbelievers has its origin in their want of faith in God and of a knowledge of His attributes. If they only knew that Allah had the power to do all that He willed and that He had decreed that Islam should triumph over all its enemies, they would not fear the disbelievers at all. Fear other than the fear of God is always due to a weakness of faith in God, and a lack of true knowledge of His attributes.

The statement that, *Allah has the power to do all that He wills*, also disposes of the question, sometimes very naively asked, whether God has the power to cause His own death or make an equal to Himself or to speak a lie, etc. As explained above, the word *شيئاً* means, something that is willed or intended, and as God never wills to cause His own death or to make an equal to Himself or to speak a lie, etc.—because these are signs of imperfection and God is perfect—so these and all similar questions, besides being foolish, are irrelevant and do not arise.

Lastly, it may be noted that this verse also serves as a warning to Muslims. One may be careful against drifting away into a state of *كفر* (disbelief) or against becoming *مُنافق* (hypocrite) of the first class, but one may imperceptibly turn into a hypocrite of the second class without feeling the change in the beginning. A true Muslim should, therefore, be ever on his guard against that danger. He should not only hold the beliefs taught by Islam, but should also act like a true Muslim

and be ever prepared for all sacrifices in the cause of Islam.

28. Important Words :

رب (Lord). For the meaning of this word see note on 1 : 2. In the present verse God Himself explains the meaning of the word رب by saying *ربكم الذي خلقكم* i.e. your *Rabb* is He Who has created you. This meaning, though absolutely correct, is not to be met with in the ordinary lexicons which interpret it simply as Lord and Sustainer. The full meaning of the word thus turns out to be "Lord, Creator and Sustainer."

لعل (so that) is generally used to denote expectation, or doubt combined with expectation. That is why Christian translators have generally rendered it as, *haply* or *peradventure* or *perhaps*. But this rendering is clearly wrong in the present context; for, as explained by Lane, the word when used by God generally signifies not doubt but certainty. In fact, God's announcements are in the nature of royal proclamations in which such words are used not to express doubt resulting from ignorance but to express hope born of certainty. The word has therefore been rightly rendered here as, *that* or *so that*. Sometimes it may be rendered as, *may be*.

Commentary :

As we have seen, the Quran began with the claim that the best Book of guidance can only come from a Being Who is All-Knowing and that such a being is Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the world, Who has sent down the Quran for the guidance and perfection of mankind. This Book is (1) a perfect treasure-house of all that is good and valuable, (2) is free

from all defects, and (3) does not stop short at any stage of spiritual progress but carries men and women of all grades of righteousness to higher and still higher stages, and so on to unlimited progress. Having made this claim, the Quran proceeds to give a brief description of the three classes: believers, disbelievers and hypocrites.

Attention is then drawn to the fact that as the Quran enables the righteous to make greater and greater spiritual progress, everybody should try to become one of the righteous and earn the spiritual benefits of the Quran. Says the Quran: *O ye men! worship your Lord (i.e. enter into His service) . . . that you may become righteous.*

Worship demands complete subjection, and the sense of subjection is generated in its perfection only when one and one's forefathers are all under obligation. History tells us that lives have been sacrificed for the sake of cruel kings simply because the ancestors of those kings had done some good to the ancestors of the people making the sacrifice. The feeling of obligation becomes stronger as generation after generation is laid under obligation. Therefore, it is a perfectly natural appeal which is made in the verse in the words: *O ye men, worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you.*

The verse then proceeds to make it clear that the object of worship is not merely recognising and acknowledging God. If it were so, the worship of idols, however unjust, would not be so injurious. God is worshipped for the sake of attaining righteousness and spiritual perfection. How can false gods make man perfect spiritually, when they have not created him and have no knowledge of his powers or limitations?

The words *لعلكم تتقون* (*that you may become righteous*) clearly point out that the command to worship is not for the benefit of God. It is for the benefit of man himself. Those who

regard the Law as a curse look upon it only as a mere show of authority on the part of God. But the Quran clearly states that God's commands are for the guidance of man. They help to nurture all his latent powers. Such a teaching cannot be a curse. He who warns a blind person of a pit lying in front of him does not curse him. A doctor who prescribes for a suffering patient does no wrong to him.

There is another point to be remembered. The word *رب* means, He Who creates and then develops by degrees. At the birth of man, the foundation is laid for his perfect future development. If worship, on his part, does not lead to the perfection of his latent powers, that worship is no worship at all. It is a mere show or a lifeless form.

The clause *لعلكم تتقون* (*that you may become righteous*) teaches us to avoid not only those things which impair man's relation with God but also those which impair the relation between man and man. He who regards God as his Creator and Sustainer will look to Him for his needs and will not cast greedy looks at the wealth of others. He can never be untrue to his fellow-men, and will remain always at peace with them. The Companions of the Holy Prophet lived for God and looked only to Him. The peace which the world witnessed in their time remains unparalleled. Indeed there can be no peace, unless we are devoted to God. If Europe had been so devoted, she would not have been suffering from the mortal disease now eating into her vitals—the hunger for land and wealth.

This verse contains the first command of God given in the Quran. As the words, *O ye men*, indicate, this command to worship God is addressed to all mankind and not to Arabs only, which shows that Islam, from the very beginning, claimed to be universal. It abolished the ideal of national religion and conceived mankind as one brotherhood.

23. Who "made the earth a bed for you, and the heaven a roof, and caused water to come down from the clouds and therewith brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Set not up, therefore, equals to Allah, while you know."²⁹

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً
وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ
رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

^a20 : 54 ; 27 : 62 ; 43 : 11 ; 51 : 49 ; 71 : 20 ; 78 : 7. ^b51 : 48 ; 78 : 13 ; 79 : 28, 29.

The question "Who is to be worshipped" is answered by the word رب (Creator) in order to disavow false gods who have created nothing and are themselves created.

Men are actuated either by love or fear. In this verse appeal is made to both motives. Love either springs from حسن i.e. beauty of the beloved, or from a feeling of احسان i.e. favour received from some one. God is beauty and the source of all beauty. One aspect of His beauty is that He creates man in a very low condition and then by degrees develops and raises him to the highest mark of perfection. The feeling of obligation is appealed to by saying "Your Lord is He Who created you and your fathers."

It is curious that when Jesus was asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matt. 22 : 36, 37). But this commandment which Jesus calls the great commandment in the Law is not presented in the beginning of the New Testament. It comes much later and then only when people asked Jesus about it, although as regards importance it should have been given the first place. In the Old Testament also this commandment occurs in later chapters. So is the case with other scriptures. None gives it the first place. Only the Quran does so.

29. Important Words :

فراش (a bed) is derived from فرش. They say فرش الشيء i.e. he spread out the thing ; he ex-

panded it. فراش means, a thing that is spread upon the ground : a thing that is spread for one to sit or lie upon : a bed on which one sleeps ; a wide or spacious plain or tract of land (Lane).

بناء (a roof) is derived from بني meaning, he built ; he constructed. So بناء means, a building ; a structure ; a thing that is built or constructed ; also the roof or ceiling of a house or of a chamber or the like (Lane).

الثمرات (fruits) is the plural of ثمرة meaning, a fruit. The word is derived from the verb ثمر which means, the fruit became ripe. اثمر means, the tree, etc. produced fruit. The word ثمرة is also used figuratively, meaning, son or offspring ; or profit of a thing (Tāj).

انداد (equals) is the plural of ند which means, the like of a person or thing ; or the like of a thing by participation of substance. It is a more specialised term than مثل which signifies a like by participation of anything. The word ند also means, a thing which does or may supply the place of another thing ; or a like that is contrary or opposed to another thing ; a thing taken as an object of worship instead of the true God (Lane). ند is to be distinguished from شريك ; for whereas ند is the like of a thing, being contrary or opposed to it, شريك is simply a participant that shares the attributes or work of a thing (Aqrab under شريك and ند).

Commentary :

The subject-matter of the last verse has been completed in this. It was said in that verse

that **رب** should be worshipped because He is the Creator and He alone can foster man's powers. In the present verse it is said that not only man but the heavens and the earth also have been created by God. It is evident that human actions depend upon environment. Trade, agriculture, industry, travel, etc. are made possible ultimately by the nature and influence of the heavens and the earth. So human actions can be guided aright only by a Being Who has made the heavens and the earth. It is only He Who can harness them for the use of man. None else has such knowledge, power or authority. So man should worship God alone.

The expression, *and Who made the heaven a roof*, suggests that just as a building or a roof is a source of protection for those living in or under it, similarly the remoter parts of the universe are a protection for our planet; and those who have studied the science of the stars, the clouds and other atmospheric phenomena know how the other heavenly bodies, running their courses through the boundless expanse rising high above the earth on all sides, make for its safety and stability.

In the clause, *caused water to come down from the clouds*, the word **سحاب** has been used in the sense of "cloud," whereas in the preceding clause, *and Who made the heaven a roof*, it signifies "heaven." Had it meant the same thing in the two places, it would have been replaced in the second place by a pronoun. The repetition of the word is intended to convey a difference of meaning in the second place.

After making it clear that everything in this world is the creation of God, attention is drawn to the fact that God has no equal. There is nothing in the whole universe which can show any part of it to have been created by anyone other than God. Why then should man worship any but Him?

In this verse it is also hinted that the perfection

of the material world depends upon a co-ordination of earthly and heavenly forces. When water is made corrupt by men on earth, fresh and pure water is supplied from heaven. Breathing makes the air foul but it is purified when it rises up. The eye is useful, but of what avail is it without the rays of the sun? In short, if the earth is a bed for man, the heaven is a roof. So with the spiritual world. Man is gifted with reason but, like the eye, reason cannot function properly without the help of divine revelation. Human instincts are pure but they become unclean by greed, malice, etc. They can only be cleansed by the water of revelation. Hence man cannot attain to spiritual success without attaching himself to God. By showing material life to be dependent upon both earth and heaven, God points to a parallel in the spiritual world, and teaches that in spiritual matters also man should not trust earthly means alone. The intellect is not enough. Like the material world, the spiritual world also requires heavenly help. Just as there is a heaven above the earth, there is a heaven above the heart and brain of man. This is God's guidance received through revelation.

An interesting question arises here. According to a widespread modern belief, the idea of God has evolved out of a primitive belief in spirits, ghosts and fairies. It is also said that in primitive times man worshipped beasts and poisonous insects and then advanced gradually to the idea of God. Modern critics appear to be agreed that the idea of many gods has always preceded the idea of one God. The history of man's beliefs is cited as evidence.

Some of those who hold such a view seem anxious to reconcile it with religion. They claim that their view does not go against religion. They say that God revealed the laws of nature by degrees; therefore there is nothing surprising if He should have

revealed Himself also by degrees. Now, all religions base themselves upon revelation. And if the basis of religion is revelation, then the belief that God revealed Himself by degrees and that He first guided the world to other gods, and then to Himself, at once falls to the ground. It is against all reason that God should first guide man to spirits, stones, rivers and snakes and then reveal Himself. What was there to hinder Him from guiding man to Himself from the very beginning? The living religions of the world have ever believed in revelation. Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam, all teach that revelation began with the creation of man. This being the case, there can have been no gradual evolution of the idea of God. Evolutionary accounts, therefore, conflict with religion. Those who hold them must deny revelation, the basis of religion.

The denial of revelation is, of course, very common in the Christian West. Christendom has failed for a long time to provide any examples of persons with revelational experience. Little wonder that those speculators who have had no such experience themselves and who have not been made aware of such experience in others should deny revelation outright. According to the Quran, however, God has spoken to man in all ages. The Quran itself is a record of revelation and, according to the Quran, the followers of Islam must continue to receive revelation. The recipient in our age is the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Nobody who knows all this can be impressed by denials of revelation. He can only treat them as mere ignorant conjectures.

Evolutionary accounts have little foundation in fact. It is said that the idea of God found amongst uncivilised peoples of the world today is polytheistic, therefore the idea of one God must have originated in polytheism. But it is not realized that the uncivilized peoples of today are not samples of the earliest human beings. Civilization has known many ages. Greece, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, India and China were centres of civilization and culture in their own days, but now they seem engulfed in darkness and ignorance. If ignorance can grow out of civilization, why not polytheism out of monotheism? In India Krishna preached the doctrine of the Unity of God, but after his time a wave of idolatry swept over the country; and when Muslims came here, they found idol-worship rampant throughout the land. In Judaism false gods have taken the place of Jehovah. Jesus preached a simple faith in One God, but Christendom now believes in Trinity. A lower conception can easily supplant a higher one. Islam is an historical religion. Even its enemies admit that it teaches belief in the pure Unity of God. But today even Muslims have degenerated to the worship of things other than God. These examples refute the doctrine that monotheism has necessarily grown out of polytheism.

Moreover, a study of primitive religion itself shows that among the primitive people the idea of a perfect Deity exists side by side with their worship of many deities. Only, God is known by different names among different peoples. There also exists among the primitives the idea of revelation; they hold it to be the medium through which they came to have a knowledge of God.

24. And if you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant, then "produce a chapter like it, and call upon your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful."³⁰

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا
بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِمَّنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

^a10 : 39 ; 11 : 14 ; 17 : 89 ; 52 : 35.

30. Important Words :

عبد (servant). For the root meaning of the word see note under 1 : 5. As explained there, the verb عبد means, he showed complete submissiveness and humility ; or he received the imprint of a thing. So عبد would mean a person who, through complete submission and humility to God, has become, as it were, an image of God. The word has been used here about the Holy Prophet by way of endearment and is expressive of the exalted position he holds in the sight of God.

شهداء (helpers) is the plural of شاهد which is derived from شهد i.e. he was present ; or he gave witness, etc. Thus شاهد means, one who is present ; one who sees or witnesses ; one who gives testimony or evidence ; one who possesses much knowledge ; one from whose knowledge nothing is hidden (Aqrab & Lane) ; also a helper (Mufradāt). Following the last mentioned signification the word may also refer here to the Jews who were friends of the disbelievers (5 : 81) and spoke of the idolaters as being *better guided in religion than those who believe* (4 : 52).

Commentary :

In the preceding two verses the Quran gave its first commandment to the people. Having been thus directly addressed by God, the polytheistic disbelievers felt a natural reaction to repudiate the monotheistic teaching of the Quran, because they felt that its acceptance meant that they should give up their long cherished beliefs.

In the present verse God says that if the Quran created doubts and disquietude in their minds and is not worthy of acceptance, the disbelievers should produce one like it. If they cannot, then this very fact would prove them to be wrong.

The subject of the incomparable excellence of the Quran has been dealt with at five different places in the Quran, i.e., in 2 : 24 ; 10 : 39 ; 11 : 14 ; 17 : 89 ; & 52 : 34, 35, and disbelievers have been challenged to produce its equal.

In two of these five verses (2 : 24 & 10 : 39) the challenge is identical, while in the remaining three verses three separate and different demands have been made from disbelievers. Thus, to begin with the largest demand in 17 : 89, disbelievers are challenged to produce the like of the whole Quran, and they have been told that even if all *jinn* and men should join together they would not be able to produce it. In 11 : 14 the challenge is limited to the production of ten chapters. In 2 : 24 and 10 : 39, however, it has been confined to one *Sūra* only ; while in 52 : 34, 35, the condition of even one *Sūra* has been omitted and disbelievers have been given the option of producing even a single piece like any one piece (i.e. announcement) of the Quran. On the face of it, this difference in the form of the challenge at different places seems to be incongruent and to spring from a lack of harmony in the Quran. Some Commentators have endeavoured to explain away this seeming incongruity by saying that it was due to the challenge having

been made at different times. At first disbelievers were called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran. When they failed to do so, the challenge was whittled down to the production of the like of any ten chapters. When, however, they were unable to produce even ten chapters, the challenge was further reduced to the production of a single chapter; and, lastly, disbelievers were asked to produce even a single piece like any piece of the Quran. This explanation, however, does not seem to hold good. The different *Sūras* containing these different challenges were revealed in the following order: (1) 52:34, 35; (2) 17:89; (3) 11:14; (4) 10:39; (5) 2:24 (Rodwell). Now in *Sūra* 52, the first to be revealed, the challenge is not qualified by any condition as regards size, disbelievers having been given the choice of producing even one single piece like any piece of the Quran. It is very strange that, whereas at first the challenge was unqualified and disbelievers were called upon to produce something comparable to any piece of the Quran, later it began to be hedged round by conditions and stipulations, first requiring disbelievers to produce the like of the whole book, then reducing the challenge to ten *Sūras*, and last of all reducing it to a single chapter. The order is most unnatural.

Moreover, some of the *Sūras* which contain this challenge were revealed on occasions so close to one another that some Commentators have found it difficult definitely to fix their order of priority. Hence it is unwise to settle this question on the basis of the chronological order of the *Sūras* containing this challenge.

Another point worth considering in this connection is that the verses in question do not mention any historical event but contain only a general challenge which stands for all time. Now the question is, in what form should the challenge be delivered to the world? Should disbelievers be called upon to produce the like

of the whole Quran, or to produce ten *Sūras* like any ten *Sūras* of the Quran, or should they be called upon to bring forward the like of one *Sūra* only or the like of any single piece of the Quran? If it is enough to make a demand for the like of a single piece of the Quran, why should a demand for the like of a *Sūra* be made, and if it is enough to make a demand for the like of one *Sūra*, the demand for the production of ten *Sūras* or, for that matter, for the whole of the Quran seems extravagant.

The fact is that these verses contain certain demands which stand for all time, and there is no need to enter into the question of their chronological order. The challenge can be made even today in all the different forms mentioned in the Quran as it was made at the time of the Holy Prophet.

Before explaining the various forms of these challenges it is worth noting that mention of them in the Quran is invariably accompanied by a reference to wealth and power, except in 2:24, which, as already stated, does not contain a new challenge but only repeats the challenge made in 10:39. From this it may be concluded that there exists a close connection between the question of wealth and power and the challenge for the production of the like of the Quran or a part thereof. This connection lies in the fact that the Quran has been held out to disbelievers as a priceless treasure. When disbelievers demanded material treasures from the Holy Prophet and asked, *Wherefore has not a treasure been sent down to him* (11:13), they were told in reply that he possessed a matchless treasure in the Quran. The same reply was repeated when disbelievers asked, *Wherefore has not an angel come with him?* (11:13). They were told in reply that angels did descend upon him; for their function was to bring the word of God, and the divine word had already been vouchsafed to him. Thus both the demand for a treasure and the demand for the descent

of angels have been jointly met by offering the Quran as a matchless treasure brought down by angels, and the challenge to produce the like of the Quran has been put forward as a proof of its peerless quality.

Let us now take the different verses containing this challenge separately. The greatest demand is that made in 17:89, where disbelievers are required to bring a book like the whole of the Quran in all its manifold qualities. In this verse disbelievers are not required to represent their composition as the word of God. They may bring it forward as their own composition and declare it to be the equal of or, for that matter, better than the Quran. As, however, it was necessary to define in what respect the work to be produced was to resemble the Quran, the Quran says in the next verse, *And of a truth We have (herein) set forth for mankind in various ways, all kinds of similitudes, but most of men would reject everything but disbelief* (17:90), hinting thereby that if disbelievers reject the divine origin of the Quran and believe it to be the work of the Prophet himself, then let them produce a book which, like the Quran, should possess the following excellences: (a) it should throw light on every essential subject pertaining to religion; (b) its discussion of these subjects should be exhaustive, offering detailed guidance on every question; (c) it should be free from all harm and contain nothing but good; and (d) it should aim not at the good of any particular people or community but at the well-being of all mankind, containing guidance for all temperaments and dispositions as well as for all circumstances and conditions. But as at the time when this challenge was made the whole of the Quran had not yet been revealed, disbelievers were not required to produce the like of the Quran there and then; and the challenge thus implied a prophecy that they would not be able to produce the like of it, neither in the form in which it then was

nor when it became complete. Again, the challenge was not confined to the disbelievers of the Prophet's time alone, but extended to doubters and critics of all times.

The second verse which contains a challenge is 11:14. In this verse the disbelievers' objection that the Prophet had not come with a treasure, nor had an angel come to him, has been met by calling upon them to bring similar *Sūras* which they should represent as the word of God. The latter demand, *i.e.*, that pertaining to the representation of the required production as the word of God, has a reference to the objection of the disbelievers that no angel has come down to the Prophet. They are told that if no angel has really come to him and his claim to receive divine revelation through the medium of angels is false, then let them also produce ten *Sūras*, claiming, like him, that they have been brought down to them by angels, and then see what their end would be. If they had not the courage to forge a lie against God, how could they think that the Prophet could be guilty of such fabrication or, if he had dared to commit this forgery, why had he remained secure from God's punishment?

The reason why the disbelievers in this verse have been called upon to produce ten *Sūras* and not the whole Quran is that the question here did not relate to the perfection of the Quran in all respects, but to that of only a portion of it. The disbelievers had objected to some parts of it being defective, as is evident from the words: *They imagine that thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee* (11:13). Hence, they have not been required here to bring a complete book like the whole Quran, but only ten *Sūras* in place of those parts of the Quran which they deem to be defective, in order that the truth of their assertion may be tested.

As for the selection of the specific number 10 for this purpose, it should be noted that in Arabic 10 represents a complete number. As the object was to refute the assertion of the disbelievers that certain portions of the Quran were defective, therefore the disbelievers were given the option of making as many as ten efforts to substantiate their claim. They were thus asked to produce ten *Sūras* not because they could produce less than that number but because the best way to refute their objection was to afford them several opportunities to substantiate the truth of their assertion. In short, since in 17:89 the whole Quran was claimed to be a perfect Book, its opponents were called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran; but since in 11:14 the point was that certain portions of it were objected to, so they were asked to choose ten such portions as appeared to them to be most defective and then produce a composition even like those portions.

The third verse where the Quran has been declared to be matchless is 10:39. Here disbelievers have been called upon to produce the like of only one *Sūra* of the Quran. This is so because, unlike the above-mentioned two verses, the challenge made in this verse is in support of a claim made by the Quran itself and not in refutation of any objection on the part of disbelievers. In the verses preceding 10:39, it was claimed that God possessed full authority over all things (see 10:32-36), and as a proof of this, in 10:38 the Quran was put forward as possessing the following excellences: (a) it contains teachings which could not be devised by man; (b) it has come in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the previous scriptures; (c) in it the imperfect teachings of the previous scriptures have been perfected; (d) the word of God embodied in it has been made secure from being interpolated or tampered with by man; and (e) its teachings are meant

for all men and all time. In support of this claim, verse 10:39 throws out a challenge to those who deny or doubt it to produce a single chapter containing these excellences in the same perfect form in which they are contained in this chapter *i.e.* ch. 10.

The verses 52:34, 35 contain the smallest of all demands. In these verses disbelievers are challenged to produce a single piece or a single announcement like any piece or announcement of the Quran. This demand also has been made in support of a claim made by the Quran itself and not in refutation of any objection on the part of disbelievers. Hence the smallness of the demand. The claim in question is made in the opening verses of chapter 52 *i.e.* *Sūra Al-Tūr* to the effect that the Quranic revelation which was promised to mankind through Moses on Mount Sinai, will continue to be written, read and published throughout the world and that its followers will continue to multiply and will comprise not only common men but persons of great spiritual and temporal eminence, and that the fountain of the new faith will continue to provide the water of eternal life to all the countries of the world so that the fulfilment of these prophecies will constitute a proof of the fact that there is a Day of Judgement. Thereafter the Quran proceeds in 52:34, 35 to challenge disbelievers that, if they look upon the revelation of the Quran to be a fabrication, then they should come forward and make a prophecy like the one made above. This challenge is unconditional and without qualification. Disbelievers are not required to represent what they produce as the word of God, nor is it laid down as a condition that their prophecy should be of their own devising. They may as they like either make a prophecy of their own devising or borrow it from any other scripture. Again, disbelievers are not asked to bring forward as many prophecies as there

are in the Quran—and these are legion—but to bring forward only one single prophecy similar to any one of the prophecies made in the beginning of the *Sūra*. They are told that they will not be able to fulfil this demand, for such a prophecy could be made only by the Being Who is the Creator and Owner of the heavens and the earth, along with their treasures, and Who not only knows, but possesses mastery of, the unseen. This challenge also stands for all time.

The fifth challenge to produce a like of the Quran is contained in the verse under comment (2:24) and here also, as in 10:39, disbelievers have been called upon to bring a *Sūra* like that of the Quran, not in refutation of any of their objections, but in support of a claim made by the Quran itself. In the case of the verse under comment this claim is stated in the beginning of the *Sūra* in 2:3 which says: *This is a perfect Book; there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous*. Similarly, 10:39 is also preceded with the words: *there is no doubt about it* (10:38). This shows that the challenge to produce a chapter like one of the Quran has special reference to the peculiarity which is described by the words, *there is no doubt about it*. The challenge given in the present *Sūra* is preceded by the claim that the Quran is a guidance for those who fear God (2:3), which means that it guides the righteous to the highest stages of spiritual progress. Hence in the above challenge it has been declared that if disbelievers are in doubt as to the divine origin of the Quran, then they should bring forward a *Sūra* that may be comparable to the Quran in the spiritual influence it exercises over its followers.

One of the characteristics of the Quran is that, whatever chapter of it we may read, it casts a subtle and sublime spiritual influence over our minds. Thus, instead of creating doubts it dispels them and takes men to a stage where no doubt can possibly survive, which is

the stage of communion with God. This stage can be attained only by the study of the Quran; no other Book can compare with it in this respect.

The above explanation will show that all these challenges calling upon disbelievers to produce the like of the Quran are quite distinct and separate one from another, and all of them stand for all time, none of them superseding or cancelling any other. The misconception that these challenges are one and the same seems to have arisen from the wrong notion that in all of them it is the elegance of the Quranic style and diction that has been held out as unique and incomparable and that it is such elegance of Arabic diction that disbelievers have been called upon to produce. But this is not the case. The challenges made in the five *Sūras* referred to above are not one or identical nor do they make the same demand; each has a distinct and separate demand of its own and it is in keeping with the nature of these demands that disbelievers have been called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran or a part of it.

The question now remains whether these demands also include a challenge to produce a work comparable to the Quran in elegance of style and diction. The answer is that they certainly do so, but only in an indirect way and not as a direct and fundamental demand, for sublime ideas can only be expressed in sublime language. As the Quran comprises sublime and lofty ideas, it was inevitable that the most beautiful diction and the chastest style should have been employed as the vehicle for the expression of those ideas; otherwise the subject-matter was liable to remain obscure and doubtful and the perfect beauty of the Quran would have become marred. Thus, in whatever form and in whatever respect disbelievers have been challenged to produce a composition like the Quran, the demand for beauty of style

25. But if you do *it* not—and never shall you do *it*—then guard against the Fire, ^awhose fuel is men and stones, *which is prepared for the disbelievers.*³¹

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا
النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۖ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

^a3 : 11 ; 66 : 7.

and elegance of diction comparable to those of the Quran also forms a part of the challenge.

31. Important Words :

الحجارة (stones) is the plural of الحجر (a stone) which is derived from the verb حجر which means, he or it prevented or hindered or resisted. A stone is called حجر because it resists pressure owing to its hardness. الحجر also means, a rock or a great mass of stone ; a metal as gold and silver which both together are sometimes called الحجران i.e. the two metals (Lane). Thus coal (not charcoal) would also be looked upon as حجر. The word حجارة may also be used metaphorically for idols made of stone or metal (Kashshāf).

أعدت (prepared) is derived from أعد which again is derived from عد which means, he considered or he counted. أعد means, he prepared a thing and made or kept it ready (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The verse says that if the opponents of Islam are not able to produce the like of the Quran as demanded in the previous verse, they should understand that it is the word of God and that they are not opposing a man but God Himself ; they should, therefore, be ready to suffer the lot of those who oppose divine will.

The clause, *and never shall you do it*, signifies that the disbelievers knew that the idols had no power of revealing anything ; so they would never call upon the idols to help them.

The word “fuel” may also be taken in a figurative sense, in which case the meaning would be that the punishment of Hell is caused by idol-worship. So the idols are like fuel for hell-fire, being a means of bringing it into existence.

The words الناس (men) and الحجارة (stones) may also be taken as indicating two classes of inmates of Hell. The word الناس (men) which, according to its root, signifies love, has been used to denote those disbelievers who may be called human in so far as they still retain something of the love of God which distinguishes human beings from stones. But the other disbelievers are called الحجارة (stones), for they have no love left for God. Such men are indeed no better than stones.

Though this verse speaks of fire and stones, it should be remembered that what is called the next world is not a material world. In fact, expressions used in the Quran to denote rewards and punishment should not be taken literally but metaphorically. It should also be noted that the punishment of the next world is not everlasting. According to Islam, Hell is not eternal. It is only a reformatory. The subject will be discussed later in its proper place.

26. And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works, that ^afor them are gardens beneath which flow streams. Whenever they are given a portion of fruit therefrom, they will say: 'This is what was given us before,' and gifts mutually resembling shall be brought to them. And they will have therein ^bmates perfectly pure and therein will they abide.³²

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ
تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ
ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ
أُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

^a3 : 16, 134, 196, 199 ; 4 : 14, 58, 123 ; 5 : 13, 86 ; 7 : 44 ; 9 : 72, 89, 100 ; 10 : 10 ; 13 : 36 ;
22 : 15, 24 ; 25 : 11 ; 32 : 18 ; 47 : 16 ; 58 : 23 ; 61 : 13 ; 64 : 10. ^b3 : 16 ; 4 : 58.

32. Important Words :

بشر (give glad tidings) is derived from بشر *bashshara* (he gave glad tidings) which again is derived from بشر (*bashara*). They say البشرة *i.e.* he laid bare its skin. Thus البشرة means, the outer and visible part of the skin. So بشر (*bashshara*) means, he gave or imparted news which changed the colour of the listener. The word has generally come to be used in connection with good or happy news. But it is also sometimes used in connection with bad news (*e.g.* 3 : 22). بشر means, one who announces good news to a people or a person. All Prophets are spoken of as بشر and نذير *i.e.* givers of good news to those who believe in them and givers of bad news to those who reject them (Aqrab & Mufradât).

الصالحات (good works) is the plural of الصالحة which is derived from the verb صالح (the opposite of فسد) meaning, he or it became good or suitable and proper. هذا الشيء يصلح لك means, this thing is suitable to you or is fit or meet for you (Aqrab). So الصالحات would be used about all those deeds and actions which are not only good intrinsically but are also meet and suitable. See also under 2 : 12.

جنان (gardens) which is the plural of جنة (a garden) is derived from جن meaning, it veiled,

concealed, or covered a thing. So جنة means, any garden having trees by which the ground is covered or concealed; an orchard or garden having luxuriousness and denseness of verdure (Aqrab & Lane). Heaven has been called جنة or garden, because: (1) the mercy of God will 'cover' its dwellers just as trees in an orchard cover the ground thereof; or (2) because the blessings of Heaven are 'hidden' from the eyes of man; or again (3) because Heaven is like a garden in which the trees represent good faith and the streams good actions.

الانهار (streams) is the plural of نهر (*nahr*) or نهر (*nahar*). They say نهر الماء *i.e.* the water flowed on the earth and cut out a channel for itself. Thus نهر (*nahr*) or نهر (*nahar*) means, a channel through which a stream or a river flows; a stream or river itself. نهر (*nahar*) also means, abundance (Aqrab).

ازواج (mates) is the plural of زوج which signifies, anything that is one of a pair or couple; it does not mean a pair but only one of a pair, whether male or female (Aqrab). The word زوج also means, a comrade (Lane).

خالدون (shall abide) is derived from خلد which means, he remained and lived on. خلد مكان means, he stayed or abided in a place. خلود means, staying on, or living without change or

deterioration for a long time but not necessarily for ever (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

This verse gives a brief description of the rewards which the believers will have in the next world.

Critics of Islam have raised all sorts of objections to this description. They say that :—

(1) The promise of such rewards is only an appeal to greed and a faith based upon greed is not worth the name. (2) The Quran promises material rewards to the believers and this is objectionable. (3) If the rewards of the next world are going to be material, then it must be supposed that the same body which one has in this life will be resurrected after death and this is against all reason, because this body perishes and the particles of one body are used in the making of several bodies. To whom and to how many will then the same body be given in the next world ? (4) Believers are promised wives in Heaven which shows that sex relations will continue in the next world. An appeal to sex is very objectionable for spiritual ends. Sex relations are necessary only for the continuation of the race in this world. Why should there be such a thing in the next ? (5) The Quranic Paradise appears to be a place of luxury and sensual pleasures. There is thus nothing spiritual about the Islamic conception of the next life.

This criticism is based on a failure to understand the real Islamic teaching. The Quran has made it clear that in this life it is not possible for man to comprehend the nature of the rewards of the next. It says : *No soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their actions* (32 : 18). That is to say, whatever the Quran says about Heaven and Hell is only metaphorical. The descriptions are not to be taken in the sense in which they are ordinarily taken in this world.

The Holy Prophet says of the blessings of the next world : " No eye has seen them, nor has any ear heard of them, nor can the mind of man form any conception of them " (Bukhārī). If the blessings of the next life are to be like the joys of this life, we should be able to form some idea of them, no matter how remote they may be. The blessings of the next life, therefore, must be quite different from the blessings of this life.

In another place in the Quran we read : *The similitude of the Heaven promised to the God-fearing is that through it flow streams; its fruit is everlasting, and so is its shade. That is the reward of those who are righteous, and the reward of the disbelievers is Fire* (13 : 36). Now the fruit of this world is not everlasting, so in order to be everlasting the fruit of the next world as well as its streams will have to be taken as something other than material. Again we read : *A similitude of the Paradise promised to the righteous : Therein are rivers of water which corrupts not; and rivers of milk of which the taste changes not; and rivers of wine, a delight to those who drink; and rivers of clarified honey* (47 : 16). There is nothing material in this. About the wine of Heaven we read : *Wherein there will be no intoxication, nor will they be exhausted thereby* (37 : 48). Again, *And their Lord will give them to drink a beverage that is pure* (76 : 22). Thus wine in Heaven will not only be pure itself but will purify the drinkers as well. Elsewhere the Quran says that the pure wine of Paradise will be tempered with *Tasnīm* (83 : 28), which means 'abundance' and 'height'. In the cup of wine that will pass from hand to hand in Heaven God says there will be *neither vanity nor sin* (52 : 24). As against this, the wine of this world is described in the Quran as : *Wine and the game of hazard and idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper. Satan desires only to create enmity*

and hatred among you by means of wine and the game of hazard and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer (5:91, 92). This proves that the wine of the next world is quite different; it is pure and purifying and nothing material.

The blessings of Heaven have indeed nothing in common with their counterparts of this world except the name. Ibn 'Abbās, the Prophet's cousin, also says the same thing (Jarīr).

Now the question arises, Why have the blessings of Heaven been given the names used of material things in this world? This is so because Islam is meant for all kinds of people. It does not address only the intellectually advanced but also all others. Therefore it uses simple words which can be understood by all. The disbelievers used to say that the Prophet disallowed the good things of the world, and his followers were thus deprived of all blessings. Therefore, while describing the blessings in store for the Muslims, God used the names of things generally looked upon as good in this world and told the believers that they would get all these things in a better form. The water of this world putrefies, but believers would have water in the next which will not putrefy. Gardens are blessings but they become decayed; so believers will have gardens which will last for ever. The unbelievers drank intoxicating wine which made them drunk and which dulled their senses; but the wine which the believers will get in Heaven will be pure and purifying. It is to bring out this important contrast that familiar words are used; otherwise there is nothing common between the delights of this world and the blessings of the next.

It may be added here that, according to Islam, the next life is not spiritual in the sense that it will just consist of a mental state and nothing else. Even in the next life the human soul will have a kind of body; only, it will not be material. One can glean some idea of this

from the phenomenon of dreams. The Quran says: *Allah takes the souls of human beings at the time of their death; and (He also takes the souls of) those that have not died, during their sleep. Then He retains those against which He has decreed death, and sends (back) the others till an appointed term. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect (39:43).* Death and sleep resemble each other, the difference being that whereas in death the human soul is completely and permanently severed from the body, in sleep the severance is only temporary and partial. Now the scenes which a man witnesses in a dream cannot be called purely mental or spiritual, because he has a body also in his dreams and finds himself sometimes in gardens and streams, and eats fruits and drinks milk. It is hard to say that the contents of dreams are only mental states. The milk enjoyed in a dream is no doubt a real experience, but no one can say that it is the material milk found in this world. Dreams have a meaning of their own. For instance, eating mangoes in a dream symbolizes a righteous child or a righteous heart; eating grapes signifies love and fear of God; and eating bananas, a good and lawful subsistence which is also easy of attainment. In short, the spiritual blessings of the next life will not be a mere subjective realization of the gifts of God with which we become familiar in this world. As a matter of fact, what we enjoy here is just a representation of the real and true gifts of God which man will find in the next world.

Again, gardens represent faith; and streams, good actions. Gardens cannot prosper without streams, nor faith without good actions. Therefore faith and actions are inseparable for the attainment of salvation. In the next world, gardens will remind the believers of their faith in this life and streams will remind them of their good works. They will know, then, that their faith and good works have not gone in vain.

The flowing of streams or rivers *beneath* the gardens also implies that every person in Heaven will have a free and unrestricted enjoyment of his portion. In this world, a single stream often serves several gardens and there is the possibility of a quarrel over it; but in Heaven each garden will have its own stream exclusively meant for itself. See also 10:10.

It is wrong to conclude from the words, *This is what was given us before*, that in Heaven the believers will be given such fruit as they will have enjoyed in this world, because, as already explained, the two are not the same. The fruit of the next world will, in fact, be the image of the quality of their own faith. When they will eat it, they will at once recognize and remember that it is the fruit of the faith they had in this world; and it will be out of gratitude for this that they will say: *This is what was given us before*.

The expression rendered as, *was given us*, may also mean, 'was promised us'; and in this sense it would mean, this is what was promised to us in the world.

The word *مُشَابِهًا* (mutually resembling) refers to the resemblance between the acts of worship performed by believers in this world and the fruits thereof in Heaven. The acts of worship performed in this life will appear to believers as fruit in the next. The more sincere and the more appropriate a man's worship, the more will he enjoy his portion of the fruit in Paradise and the better in quality will it be. It, therefore, lies in one's own power to improve the quality of one's fruit as one likes.

The expression, *mutually resembling*, also implies that in Paradise one spiritual food will completely harmonize with the other, so that the possibility of spiritual disease will be eliminated altogether. It also means that the food in Heaven will be suited to each and every individual and to his stage of progress and degree of development.

The words, *they will abide*, signify that the believers will go on abiding in Heaven and will not be subject to any change or decay. Man dies only when he cannot assimilate food or when some one kills him. But since the food of Paradise will be perfectly suited to every individual and since man will have pure and peaceful companions, death and decay will automatically disappear.

The Faithful will also have pure mates in Heaven. A good wife is a joy and a comfort. The Faithful try to have good wives in this world, and they will have good and virtuous company in the next. Yet these joys of Heaven are not physical.

A typical Christian comment on this subject is made by Sir William Muir: "It is very remarkable that the notices in the Coran of this voluptuous paradise are almost entirely confined to a time when, whatever the tendency of his desires, Mohammad was living chaste and temperate with a single wife of threescore years of age. It is noteworthy that in the *Medina Sūras*, that is, in all the voluminous revelations of the ten years following the Hegira women are only twice referred to as constituting one of the delights of paradise and on both occasions in these simple words: 'And to them (believers) there shall be therein pure wives'. Was it that the soul of Mohammad had at that period no longings after what he had then to satiety the enjoyment of? Or that a closer contact with Jewish principles and morality repressed the budding pruriency of the revelation, and covered with merited confusion the picture of his sensual paradise which had been drawn at Mecca?" (Muir, page 76).

It is amazing how these Christian critics with pretensions to culture and learning will draw on sheer speculation to attack the honour of a Teacher who is held in the deepest reverence and devotion by many millions of men and

women all over the world. They seem emboldened to do so, because Christians today hold political sway over the Muslims. A few centuries of power have made them forget that Muslims ruled over Christendom for fully 1,000 years, and during this time they never said anything unbecoming about Jesus. They respected Christian susceptibilities when Christians were quite unprotected and were much weaker than Muslims are today. Would to God Christians did not feel so elated!

Sir William conveniently ignores the fact that there are other things besides women which are mentioned in the Meccan chapters and to which there is no reference in the Medinite chapters. We read in the Meccan chapters that there will be wine, honey and rivers of milk in Paradise. Was the Holy Prophet deprived even of these things at Mecca that he should have compensated himself by imagining them in Paradise? Nothing could be more absurd than this. Personally the Holy Prophet was much better off at Mecca than he was at Medina. His rich wife Khadija was then alive and she had placed all her wealth at his disposal. By the time he reached Medina, most of this wealth had been spent in good works and the Holy Prophet was left a poor man with little to live on. If the picture of Paradise was an imaged compensation for his wants, it should have emerged at Medina instead of at Mecca.

Supposing Sir William is right, cannot critics of Christianity say justifiably that Jesus imagined himself the king of the Jews because he was persecuted everywhere? Could they not also say that as Jesus saw nothing of sex life in this world, he remained obsessed with the idea of a second advent and imagined himself a bridegroom taking no less than five virgins for wives? In the words of the New Testament, he is reported to have said: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet

the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. . . . And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut" (Matt. 25, 1—10). A bridegroom surrounded by a bevy of virgins—is not this the Heaven of Jesus' imagination?

But to revert to the subject; the disbelievers at Mecca used to taunt the Muslims about their poverty, saying they had nothing of the good things which they had, so God took over their own phrases and said that the rewards which believers would have in Paradise would be even better. When Islam was established at Medina, the disbelievers gave up their taunts. So God also dropped the earlier descriptions of Paradise. The descriptions in their deep significance, however, hold for all time.

At Mecca, moreover, it was necessary to explain and emphasize the basic belief of Islam. Therefore, greater detail of doctrine is found in the Meccan chapters, and as Paradise, the abode of believers in the after life, is an important item of belief, it is dealt with in detail in them. At Medina, on the contrary, practical matters like personal ethics and social legislation became more important. So greater attention was given to them in the Medinite chapters. The Meccan *Sûras* also abound in descriptions of Hell. What are they a compensation for?

Sir William also suggests that the Holy Prophet changed his views about Paradise under the influence of the Jews and the Christians of Medina. But he forgets that

27. Allah "disdains not to ^bgive an illustration as small as a gnat or even smaller. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord, while those who disbelieve say, 'What does Allah mean by such an illustration?' 'Many does He adjudge by it to be erring and many by it does He guide, and none does He adjudge thereby to be erring except the disobedient,³³

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيَ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ
رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَا ذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ
بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا
يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

^a33:54. ^b14:25; 16:76, 112; 47:4; 66:12. ^c6:118; 7:187; 13:28; 16:94; 40:35.

the stock criticism made by Christian writers is that some Christian slaves had taught the Holy Prophet the Christian scriptures, the substance of which was incorporated in the Quran. Sir William himself alleges that the Holy Prophet learnt Christianity from *Suhaib*, a Roman slave at Mecca (Life of Muhammad, p. 67). If the Holy Prophet at Mecca already knew the Christian teachings, he need not have waited for their influence until his arrival at Medina. In point of fact, in the Jewish and the Christian scriptures there are no descriptions of Paradise. The Jews and the Christians have remained so engrossed in the affairs of this life that their Books do not say much about the life to come. The promises made by their Prophets about the next life have always been taken by them to pertain only to this life. It cannot be imagined that anybody could be influenced by such a teaching.

33. Important Words :

يَسْتَحْيَ (disdains) is derived from حَيَّ which means : (1) he lived or had life; (2) he felt or had a sense of shame or shyness or bashfulness. The infinitive حَيَّاء means, sense of shame or modesty or shyness or bashfulness; or keeping back from a thing through fear of blame. اسْتَحْيَا means, he felt a sense of shame or shyness; he

kept back, or he forbore, or he shrank from. اسْتَحْيَا means, he disdained it, or he refused to do it by reason of pride, or he kept far from it (Lane).

اضل (He adjudges to be erring) is from ضل which is derived from ضل which means, he went astray; he lost his way; he erred; he was lost; he perished. اضل is the transitive form of ضل They say اضله i.e. he led him astray; he caused him to err; he lost him or it; he caused him to perish. اضله also means, he found him to be erring or straying or lost, etc. (Lane). اضله الله may also mean, (1) God adjudged him to be erring or He adjudged him to have gone astray; (2) God forsook or abandoned him and he went astray (Kashshāf). See also 1:7

فَاسِقِينَ (the disobedient) is the plural of فَاسِقٌ which is derived from the verb فَسَقَ which means, he left the right course, or he declined from the right path. فَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ means, he departed from the command of his Lord; he disobeyed his Lord. فَاسِقٌ is thus one who departs from the right course or from the way of truth, or from the limits of the law, or from the bounds of obedience. The word is generally applied to one who first takes upon himself to obey an authority or to observe the ordinances of a law and then falls short of it (Lane & Aqrab).

28. Who "break the covenant of Allah after having established it, and cut asunder what Allah has bidden to be joined, and create disorder in the earth ; it is these that are the losers.³⁴

الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَ
يَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

^a2 : 101 ; 4 : 156 ; 5 : 14 ; 13 : 26.

Commentary :

If, as described in the previous verse, there is not much in common between the gifts of this world and those of the next, why has the Quran given a description of Heaven at all? This question is answered in the present verse. Even if the picture of Heaven and Hell given in the Quran is not exact, it cannot be denied that the imagery used enlightens and helps us to form an idea of the next life. God has, no doubt, described Heaven and Hell by using metaphors and similes, but no one can say that they are useless. Metaphors and similes are used in all languages, and they express depths of meaning which cannot be reached otherwise, and in things of the spirit they afford perhaps the only method by which ideas can be conveyed. The words used for describing Heaven may be as inadequate and insignificant as a *gnat*; nevertheless they help to conjure up the picture. The believers know the words are only metaphorical and try to get to the depth of their meaning; but the disbelievers begin to find fault with them and increase in error and misguidance.

The words *يضل به كثيرا* (lit. many does He misguide) have been translated in the text as, *many does He adjudge by it to be erring*. This, as shown under Important Words above, is a perfectly correct rendering, for though misguidance springs from one's own self, as the verse itself makes clear in the concluding clause, yet it is God, the final Judge, Who declares or adjudges the misguided to be so.

34. Important Words :

وُثِقَ (having established it) is derived from *وُثِقَ* which means, it became firm and established. *وُثِقَ* means, he made it firm and fast; he bound or tied it firmly and strongly (Aqrab).

الْخَاسِرُونَ (losers) which is the plural of *خاسر* is derived from *خسر* which means, he lost; he suffered a loss; he went astray; he became lost; he perished. Thus *خاسر* means one who loses or suffers a loss, or one who goes astray (Lane). See also 6 : 13.

This verse gives some characteristics of *فاسقين* (the disobedient) mentioned in the previous verse. These characteristics are that: (1) they break the covenant made with God; (2) they cut asunder the relations which God commands to be strengthened; and (3) they create disorder and mischief in the earth.

Regarding the first, it should be remembered that the covenant which they break has been mentioned in the following two verses :

(a) *And when thy Lord brings forth from Adam's children—out of their loins—their offspring and makes them witnesses against their own selves by saying 'Am I not your Lord?' they say 'Yea, we do bear witness.' This He does lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'We were surely unaware of this' (7 : 173).*

(b) *And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets, saying 'Whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom and then there comes to you a*

29. How can you disbelieve in Allah? When you were without life, and He gave you life, and then will He cause you to die, then restore you to life, and then to Him shall you be made to return.³⁵

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

^a19 : 34 ; 22 : 67 ; 30 : 41 ; 40 : 12 ; 45 : 27.

Messenger, fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him and help him. And He said, 'Do you agree, and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter?' They said, 'We agree'; He said, 'Then bear witness and I am with you among the witnesses' (3:82).

Regarding the second characteristic, it should be remembered that love of God dies in their hearts and they do not try to establish any relation with Him; or if the relation has once been established, they allow it to be broken. Their love is confined to things of this world and all their attention is given to them.

Thirdly, the verse points out that even their love of the world is not sincere, for if it were so, they would protect it against disorder and mischief; but as matters stand, they themselves ruin it by creating disorder and mischief. So they are losers in every respect.

35. Important Words :

اموات (without life) is the plural of ميت which means: (1) a thing dead, or (2) a thing without life. Thus the word ميت is used both for a thing which so far has had no life and for a thing which had had life but is now dead. The word ميت is also used about one who is dying or is nearing death but has not yet died (Lane). See also 2 : 20.

احيا (he gave life) is derived from حي which means, he lived or he had life. The transitive form احيا means, he gave life, he brought to life, he saved the life of (Agrab & Lane).

حياة (life) which is the opposite of موت (death) signifies: (1) the faculty of growth, as in an animal or a plant; (2) the faculty of sensation; (3) the faculty of intellect; (4) freedom from grief or sorrow; (5) everlasting life in the world to come; (6) advantage or profit or a means thereof; (7) state of activity and power (Lane).

تكفرون (you disbelieve) is derived from كفر (he disbelieved) already explained under 2:7. The infinitive form is كفر (disbelief). كفر بالله (disbelief in Allah) means not only disbelieving in the existence of God but also denying His attributes and refusing to obey His commandments.

Commentary :

This verse reverts to the original subject of revelation. The question of the reward of believers and the punishment of disbelievers was only incidental. The real subject is that of revelation. In this verse the Quran explains why without revelation spiritual life would be impossible. Nobody can know anything about the next life without the help and guidance of God Who alone knows everything. The verse points out that when God provides for our physical needs, there is no reason why He should not provide for our spiritual needs, which are much more important.

God is Wise. If human life had no purpose, God would not have created it; having created it, He would not have made it subject to death, unless there had been an after-life. If death were the end of all life, the creation of man would turn out to

30. ^aHe it is who created for you all that is in the earth: then ^bHe turned towards the heaven, and He perfected them as seven heavens: and He knows all things.³⁶

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝

^a22 : 66 ; 31 : 21 ; 45 : 14. ^b7 : 55 ; 10 : 4 ; 41 : 10—13.

be mere sport. The fact that God does all this shows that He has created man not to return to dust after a life of 60 or 70 years but for a better, fuller and everlasting life, which he must live after death.

The word “then” in the clause, *then to Him shall you be made to return*, hints that after death the human soul does not go at once to Heaven or Hell. There is an interim period in which the soul is made to taste *some* of the good or bad results of its deeds. The resurrection which will herald a full and complete requital will take place later.

The mentioning of life twice (in the words *احيا* and *يحيى*) may also refer to the rise of Islam in this world, for Islam is the means of spiritual life. Islam had its first life in the time of the Holy Prophet; the second life was to come in the Latter Days. This is referred to in 62 : 4, where it is said that the Holy Prophet of Islam will make, as it were, a second appearance in the world. The promise has been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

36. Important Words :

استوى (he turned) is derived from *سوى* meaning, it became straight and even and rightly set. *استوى* gives the same meaning as *سوى*. It also means, he became firm or was firmly settled. *استوى على ظهر دابة* means, he became firmly seated on the horse or the like. *استوى على العرش* means, he (the king) was or became firmly established on the throne. *استوى الى الشئ* means, he turned to a thing, or he directed his

attention to it (Aqrab). *استوى* gives different meanings when used with regard to two or more things and when used with regard to one thing only. When used about more than one thing, it means, to be or to become equal; and when used about one thing only it means, to become straight and firm (Mufradāt).

سوى (perfected them) is derived from *سوى* (*sawwā*) which is the transitive form of *سوى* (*sawiya*) for which see above. *سوى* means, he made it uniform or even; he made it congruous or consistent in its several parts; he fashioned it in a suitable manner; he made it adapted to the exigencies, or requirements, of its case; he perfected it; he made it in a right or good manner; or he put it into a right or good state (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

Whatever is on the earth is created by God for the benefit of man. Elsewhere we read, *And He has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect* (45 : 14). The sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies are of immense benefit to mankind. Modern science has made many discoveries in this connection and more may yet be made, all of which testify to the truth and comprehensiveness of the Quranic teaching. Science also continues to find more and more the properties of things of this earth; many things which were formerly thought to be useless are now known to be highly serviceable to man.

Again, of all creatures man alone has the knowledge to profit by the things of the world. When so many things have been created to promote the comfort of man and to extend the field of his activities, and when such unlimited provision has been made for his material advance, it cannot be said that there is no purpose in the creation of man or no provision for his spiritual advance.

The verse also hints that the world is the common inheritance of mankind. It should not become the property of one man or one nation. By ignoring this great truth, Europe is now going to rack and ruin.

If the teachings of the Quran are acted upon, envy and malice between individuals and nations will disappear. The ordinances of Islam regarding charity and *Zakāt* are also based upon this conception of the world being the common inheritance of all men. Islam does not disallow the right of private ownership but this is not to be exercised so as to deprive others of their right to the common inheritance.

It should also be noted that, according to most religions, this world is not a desirable place for man. Salvation, according to them, lies in killing desire or escaping from evil and suffering. The Jews, on the other hand, make this world the sole end of life. It is Islam alone that teaches man to use

rightly the gifts and opportunities which this world affords and to make them a means of attaining success and salvation in the next.

The words, *He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth; then He turned towards the heaven*, do not refer to the creation of the earth or the heavens. The verse only purports to say that whatever has been created in the earth is for the benefit of man. Then it goes on to say that those who make good use of the gifts of God will advance to higher and still higher stages of spiritual progress. The words "seven heavens" signify seven stages of spiritual progress, the figure seven, according to Arabic idiom, standing for perfection and completeness. So God has not omitted to provide a place of everlasting spiritual progress, viz. Paradise of the next world.

With this verse concludes the present discussion about the necessity of revelation. The way God has created the universe points to the necessity of revelation. If man is not destined for unlimited spiritual progress for which revelation is the only effective means, there was no need to create the heaven and the earth and whatever is in them for his benefit, nor were the powers and capabilities, with which he has been equipped, necessary for him. All this is to enable him to make endless progress.

- R. 4 31. And when thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth,' they said, 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood?—and We glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' He answered, 'I know what you know not.'³⁷
- وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِیْفَةً
قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِیْهَا مَنْ یُّفْسِدُ فِیْهَا وَیَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ
وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ اِنِّىْۤ اَعْلَمُ
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝۳۷

7:130; 10:15; 15:29; 24:56; 38:27.

37. Important Words :

قال (said) is a common Arabic word meaning, he said. Sometimes, however, it is used in a figurative sense when, instead of a verbal expression, a state or condition amounting to a verbal expression is meant. For example, the expression امتلاء الحوض و قال قطنی i.e. the tank became full, and said, 'that will suffice,' does not mean that the tank actually said so, but simply this that its condition implied that it was full. The word is also used in the sense of holding a view. We say فلان یقول بقرول اى حنیفة i.e. that man holds a view similar to that of Abū Hanīfa. Again, the word is sometimes used to denote something not yet spoken but still in the mind. We say: فی نفسی قول لم اظهره i.e. there is something in my mind which I have not yet disclosed (Lisān & Mufradāt).

الملائكة (the angels) is the plural of ملك (an angel). Authorities differ as to the derivation of the word. Some derive it from ملك but the more commonly accepted derivation is from الاك which is used in the sense of conveying a message, the word الوکة meaning 'a message' (Mufradāt & Lane). This explains the object of the creation of the angels. They are meant to convey God's message to men and to execute His will in the universe.

خليفة (vicegerent) is derived from خلف which means, he came after, or stood in place of. The word خليفة is used in three different senses: (1) one who comes after and stands in the

place of some one, (2) an امام (Imām) or supreme religious head and (3) a sovereign or king or ruler (Aqrab). The word is also used for one who precedes someone and is followed by him (Qadīr).

نسبح (we glorify) is derived from سبى i.e. he went or travelled far away. سبى عن الامر means, he got freedom from the affair, having completed it. سبى فی الماء means, he swam in the water. سبى فی الفلك means, the planet, etc. glided in the firmament. سبى means, he prayed. سبى الله means, he declared God to be free from all defects and weaknesses; he glorified God (Aqrab). The word is used about God and conveys the sense of glorifying Him and declaring Him to be free from all defects—anything that may detract from, and adversely affect, His attributes of Oneness, Knowledge, Power, Purity, etc. (Tāj & Mufradāt).

نقدس (extol holiness) is derived from قدس i.e. he became pure and blessed. قدس الله فلانا means, God purified and blessed him. قدس الرجل الله means, the man declared God to be holy and free from defects (Aqrab). The word thus has a meaning similar to the preceding word i.e. nusabbiḥu, but it conveys the further sense of ascribing to God the positive attributes of Holiness, Majesty, etc. (Lisān & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

This verse is important, and Commentators have differed about its meaning. Who was

Adam, where was he placed, why did God speak to the angels about his being appointed as *khalīfa*, why did the angels object to this appointment, are some of the questions which arise here at once.

But before dealing with them it is necessary to explain what connection this verse has with the preceding one, and why the Quran refers to Adam, while discussing the ministry of the Holy Prophet of Islam. If the Holy Prophet was a true Messenger of God, was he the first to receive a message from heaven or did similar messages precede his? If he was the first Messenger, did God neglect those of His countless creatures who lived before him? These questions make the subject of Adam's ministry at once relevant. The verse is intended to convey that the Holy Prophet is not the first Prophet; others have gone before him and Adam was the first link of the chain. Thus, by making a reference to the ministry of Adam, God removes the doubt agitating the minds of disbelievers about the mission of the Holy Prophet. It does not matter, if they do not understand his mission; even the angels did not understand the purpose of prophethood at its inception.

Adam, who lived about 6,000 years ago, is popularly believed to be the first man created by God upon this earth. This view is, however, not corroborated by a close study of the relevant facts. The truth is that the world has passed through different cycles of creation and civilization, and Adam, the progenitor of the present human race, is only the first link in the present cycle, and not the very first man in God's creation. Nations have risen and fallen, civilizations have appeared and disappeared. Other Adams may have gone before our Adam; other races may have lived and perished, and other cycles of civilization appeared and disappeared. This view has also been held by certain eminent Muslim savants. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, the great mystic, says that once he

saw himself in a dream performing a circuit of the Ka'ba. In this dream a man appeared before him and claimed to be one of his ancestors. "How long is it since you died?" asked Ibn 'Arabī. The man replied, "More than forty thousand years." "But this period is much more than what separates us from Adam," said Ibn 'Arabī. The man replied, "Of which Adam are you speaking? About the Adam who is nearest to you or of some other?" "Then I recollected," says Ibn 'Arabī, "the saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that God had brought into being no less than a hundred thousand Adams, and I said to myself, 'Perhaps this man who claims to be an ancestor of mine was one of the previous Adams'" (Futūḥāt, iii. 607).

If the period covered by the progeny of each Adam be taken to be of seven thousand years, on an average, then, on the basis of the Holy Prophet's saying referred to above, the age of the human race, as such, works out to be 700 million years; and this is the age of the progeny only of Adams, which does not include such races as may have passed before the creation of the first Adam. As against this, modern science gives one million years as the age of the human race (Enc. Br. 14th Edition, xiv, 767).

It is not claimed that the race which lived before Adam was entirely swept away before he was born. Most probably, there had remained a small degenerated remnant of the old race and Adam was one of them. God then selected him to be the progenitor of a new race and the precursor of a new civilization. Created, as it were, out of the dead he represented the dawn of a new era of life. In this connection we may well quote from one of the speeches of the Promised Messiah, Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement:

"We do not follow the Bible in holding that the world began with the birth of Adam six

or seven thousand years ago, and that before this there was nothing, and God was, as it were, idle and without work. Neither do we claim that all mankind, who are now found in different parts of the earth, are the progeny of the self-same Adam. On the contrary, we hold that this Adam was not the first man. Mankind existed even before him, as is hinted by the Quran itself, when it says of Adam, 'I am about to place a *Khalīfa* in the earth.' As *khalīfa* means a successor, it is clear that men existed even before Adam. Hence, we cannot say whether the original inhabitants of America, Australia, etc. are the progeny of this last Adam, or of some other Adam gone before him" (*Al-Hakam*, May 30th, 1908).

The word *khalīfa* used about Adam in the verse has, as pointed out above, a reference to the fact that he was a remnant or successor of the old race and was selected by God to bring into being a new race; it also means a vicegerent of God—an *Imām* or leader appointed by God to fulfil a special mission.

The question here arises, why did the angels object to Adam's appointment as *Khalīfa*? In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the so-called objection is not really an objection; it is merely a presentation of facts placed before God, not by way of objection but to gain knowledge and obtain enlightenment. In fact, whenever a new Prophet is raised, God intends to bring about through him a revolution in the world, a change in the existing system, an ushering in of a new era. This process naturally entails the destruction of the old system and the construction of a new one. This was to be particularly the case with Adam's ministry, as he was the first Messenger of a new order.

The people before Adam were without Law and lived almost like savages. Law was to be introduced through Adam and with the introduction of Law was to come sin, for sin is nothing but the breaking of Law. The angels,

with their limited knowledge and little insight into the future, were naturally perturbed at the idea that with the ministry of Adam, sin and disobedience would come into being, and people would thenceforward begin to be condemned and punished for acts against which there had previously been no bar. In the view of the angels, Adam was nothing but a Law-giver who was to prescribe limitations for the actions of man and mete out punishment to those who transgressed. The future *Khalīfa* was thus going to shed blood and create disorder in the earth by shaking the foundations of society.

The angels saw the darker side of the picture only, but God saw the brighter side. Adam was, in the sight of God, a trumpet through which His clarion call was going to be sounded to the people. The dead were going to be quickened and the slumberers awakened from their sleep. Henceforward, there were to come into being men who would know their God and manifest His attributes and lead pious and righteous lives.

God could not leave mankind in a state of spiritual death, just because one section would have to be dubbed as disobedient. One obedient soul was better in the sight of God than a million disobedient ones. Scattered spots of light with patches of darkness, however large, were better than a universal veil of gloom covering the entire earth.

Moreover, Adam and his message could not be held responsible for the recalcitrant spirits who rejected him. He was only a harbinger of mercy, and those who rejected him and thereby incurred the displeasure of God were themselves to blame for their doom. The sun is not to be condemned for the shadows that must result from its light.

This is the deep truth underlying the story which the verse under discussion narrates to the world, and the verse has been very fittingly placed in the beginning of the Quran to serve

as a warning and an eye-opener for those to whom the message of the Holy Prophet of Islam was addressed. The Prophet was bringing light from God and in the wake of his message was to come a gigantic process of destruction and construction for which mankind was to be prepared. Some were to be awakened from sleep and saved from fire, and others to be shaken out of slumber to commit yet more acts of mischief and fan the fire that was blazing. But the believers, however small in number, were far weightier in the sight of God than hosts of disbelievers who had brought destruction on their own heads. Nay, the Prophet taken singly was weightier than the whole of mankind put together. According to a ḥadīth God said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ "لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا، أَنَا خَلَقْتُ الْإِنْسَانَ" "But for thee, O Muhammad, I would not have cared to bring into being the whole universe." This is not an idle boast but a statement full of truth and wisdom. For, is not a grain of truth better than a whole mountain of falsehood? And the Prophet was not a grain of truth, but a whole mountain of it.

In the verse under discussion, and for that matter, in the verses that follow, the conversation between God and angels need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense, i.e., it is not necessary that the dialogue should have actually taken place in so many words. As explained under Important Words, the word *قال* is sometimes used in a figurative sense to convey not actually a verbal expression, but simply a state or condition amounting to a verbal expression. In this sense, it would not be necessary to hold that God actually spoke the words ascribed to Him or that the angels actually replied in so many words. It may simply mean that the angels by their state or condition implied a reply that has been here ascribed to them in words.

Much has been said about the place where Adam was born or where he was raised as a Reformer. The popular view is that he was placed in Paradise but was later expelled there-

from and put somewhere on the earth. But the words *in the earth* belie this view. These words definitely prove that Adam lived on the earth and it was on the earth that he was raised as a Reformer. As to the place of Adam's residence, it may be noted that a study of the relevant facts, into a detailed discussion of which we need not go here, indicates that most probably Adam was first made to live in Iraq but was later directed to move down to a neighbouring land.

As we have not held Adam—God's vicegerent spoken of in this verse—to be the first man created by God, we will not enter here into the discussion as to how and when the first man was created. The subject of the initial creation of man will be dealt with under relevant verses.

As will be noted, the word *khalīfa* has been used in the verse under comment in the sense of a Prophet; for truly speaking Prophets are also the *khalīfas* of God, manifesting the divine attributes in accordance with the requirements of their age. In fact, the word *khalīfa* has been used in three senses:—

Firstly, it is used to denote a Prophet of God. Prophets are, as it were, the images of God. Adam was a *khalīfa* in this sense. David has also been called a *khalīfa* in this sense in the Quran. Says God: (*We said*), 'O David, We have made thee a *Khalīfa* or vicegerent in the earth' (38:27).

Secondly, the word *khalīfa* is spoken of a people who come after and stand in place of another. Thus, when a people decline or are destroyed and another people take their place, the latter are called their *khalīfas* as in 7:70 and 7:75.

Thirdly, the successors of a Prophet are also called *khalīfas* because they follow in his footsteps and enforce his Law and maintain unity among his followers. Such a *khalīfa* may either be elected by the people or appointed by the Prophet or raised directly by God as a Prophet serving the cause of the preceding one. Abū Bakr was a *khalīfa* of the Holy

Prophet elected by the people after him. Moses appointed Aaron as his *khalifa* when he went up the Mount, saying to him, *Act for me (lit. be my khalifa) among my people in my absence, and manage them well, and follow not the way of those who cause disorder* (7: 143). Though Aaron was a Prophet himself, yet he also acted as a *khalifa* in the absence of Moses. In the same way, God sometimes raises a Prophet to reform the followers of another Prophet. Such a Prophet does not bring a new Law but only enforces the existing Law. As he carries on the work of his predecessor, he is called his *khalifa* or successor. He is neither appointed by his predecessor nor elected by the people but is directly commissioned by God. There have been many such *khalifas* among the Israelites. They were Prophets of God but brought no new Law, simply serving the Law of Moses (5: 45). Jesus was the last of these *khalifas*. He brought no new Law as he himself says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5: 17, 18).

Muslims have been promised all these three kinds of *khalifas*. Says the Quran: *Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and do good works, that He will surely make them khalifas in the earth, as He made khalifas those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely change their condition, after their fear, into peace and security: They will worship Me, (and) they will not associate anything with Me. But whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious* (24: 56). God made Muslims the inheritors of the earth in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Then after the Holy Prophet He established the *khilāfat* of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī. And finally

now, according to the Ahmadiyya Movement, God has made Ahmad of Qadian a *khalifa* of the Holy Prophet in the same sense in which He made Jesus a *khalifa* of Moses. Ahmad has attained to prophethood by following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet and has brought no new Law. He has been raised to serve Islam and make it dominant in the world.

This is the first verse of the Quran which makes mention of angels, so a short note about them will not be out of place here.

As pointed out under Important Words, the word *مَلَك* has the literal meaning of a "message-bearer" or "agent." This explains the object of the creation of the angels. They bring messages of God and execute His will in the universe. This does not mean that God is not All-Powerful and All-Knowing and All-Encompassing and that He stands in need of any agents to execute His will or to carry His messages. But in His eternal wisdom He has decided to work with a system. Just as He has a system in the physical world, He has a system in the spiritual world also. The establishment of a system or a method of work is not due to any weakness in God but is, on the other hand, a sign of perfection. Thus angels are part of the system with which God executes His will in both the physical and the spiritual worlds. In the physical world they form the first link, with a number of physical links descending downwards; but in the spiritual world they form a direct link between God and man. We may not quite understand the nature of their being, but we may well understand the object of their creation and the functions which they are meant to perform.

According to the teachings of Islam, there is quite a large number of angels, and they are divided into classes, each occupying a definite position and serving a definite purpose. They exercise their influence in their respective spheres and serve as agents for executing God's will. In the physical world they remain, so to

32. And He taught Adam all the names, then He put the objects of these names before the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if you are right.'³⁸

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ
فَقَالَ أُنَبِّئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

٣٧ : 181 ; 17 : 111 ; 20 : 9 ; 59 : 24, 25.

speak, behind the curtain and exercise their influence through physical agencies working in the universe. It is only when we come to the final physical agency that the sphere of the angels begins. In the spiritual world, however, the influence of the angels is more evident. It is direct and works without any intervening agency. This is one of the reasons why Islam has included belief in angels among the fundamental articles of faith (2 : 286), because as matters stand, disbelief in angels would mean shutting off the whole avenue through which the light of God comes to man.

Angels are not visible to the physical eye. Yet they do sometimes appear to man in one form or another. This appearance, however, is not real but simply a sort of manifestation. This is why the appearance of the same angel at different times may assume different forms. The contact, however, is not imaginary but real, and exercises direct influence which is definitely felt and may even be tested through its results. There are several ḥadīth to the effect that angels appeared to the Holy Prophet a number of times in one form or another. It must, however, be definitely understood that when we speak of an angel appearing to a human being, we do not mean his actual descending on the earth and leaving his fixed station in the heavens. We simply mean his manifestation by means of which he assumes a form which becomes visible to man. It must further be understood that an angel is not merely a force but a living being who executes the will of his Lord, wherever and in whatever manner demanded.

As for the functions of angels, the Quran

enumerates a number of them, some of the more important being the following :

1. They are bearers of divine messages (22 : 76).
2. They inspire men to do righteous deeds, moving their hearts to virtue (91 : 9 ; also Tirmidhi, ch. on *Tafsīr*).
3. They serve the Prophets and help their cause (15 : 30 ; 4 : 167) ; they also help believers (41 : 31, 32).
4. They bring punishment upon those who oppose the Prophets (6 : 159) ; and inspire their enemies with fear and awe (3 : 125, 126).
5. They enforce the laws of nature and, as it were, bear the Throne of God on their shoulders. (40 : 8).

The reason why angels have been mentioned in this verse in connection with the mission of Adam is that, as indicated above, one of the functions of the angels is to help the Messengers of God ; so whenever a new Prophet is raised in the world, the angels are bidden to serve him by bringing into play the different forces of nature to help his cause. When, therefore, God decided to raise Adam as a Reformer, He informed the angels of His decision so that they should devote themselves to his service.

For a fuller discussion of the subject of angels the reader is referred to (1) *Tauḍīḥ* and (2) *Ā'ina* by the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement and (3) *Malā'ika* by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, present Head of the Ahmadiyya Community.

38. Important Words :

أَسْمَاء (names) is the plural of اسم for which see note on 1 : 1. اسم means, (1) the name of a thing

i.e. a word fixed for a thing or attribute for the purpose of distinction; (2) a mark or sign of a thing (Aqrab); (3) fame or reputation of a person or thing (Lane); (4) a word, its meanings and combinations (Mufradāt).

صادقین (right) is the plural of صادق which is derived from صدق. They say صدق في ظنه *i.e.* he was or is correct in his opinion (Lane). صدق في الحديث means, he spoke the truth. صدقه means, he was sincere to him or he was his well-wisher (Aqrab). صدقت means: (1) you are speaking the truth, not a lie; (2) what you say is right, not wrong. It is in the latter sense that the word has been used in the present verse.

Commentary :

Commentators differ as to what is here meant by the word أسماء (names). Some think that God taught Adam the names of different things and objects, *i.e.*, He taught him language. Others hold that God taught him the names of his offspring.

There is no doubt that man needed language in order to become civilized and God must have taught Adam a language, but the Quran indicates that there are أسماء (names or attributes) which man must learn for the perfection of his religion and morals. They are referred to in the verse: *And to Allah alone belong all perfect attributes; so call on Him by these and leave alone those who deviate from the right way with respect to His attributes. They shall be requited with what they do* (7:181). This verse shows that man cannot attain to divine knowledge without a correct conception of God's أسماء or attributes and that this can be taught only by God. So it was necessary that God should have, in the very beginning, given Adam knowledge of His attributes so that man should know and recognize Him and attain His nearness and should not drift away from Him.

The verse quoted above (7:181) shows that the word أسماء (names) is used to signify the

attributes of God and that a Muslim must be familiar with those attributes, so that he may pray to Him, invoking attributes most suited to the nature of the prayer. For example, if one prays for forgiveness and mercy, one should invoke the attributes of forgiveness and mercy; and if the prayer be for the attainment of righteousness, God should be invoked by names which pertain to that quality. The above verse also indicates that man must not of himself devise the attributes of God, because it is only God who can describe His attributes; man, being himself the creation of God, cannot do so. In fact, those who try to devise God's attributes have been threatened with divine punishment.

In short, we learn from this verse that a Muslim must know God's أسماء (names) which can be taught by Him alone, and which man has no right to devise out of his own fancy. There is strong evidence that God gave Adam a knowledge of His attributes. The view gains further strength when we take into consideration the difference between man and angel. According to the Quran, man differs from angels in that, whereas the former can be an image or reflex of الإسماء الحسنی *i.e.* all the divine attributes, the latter represent only a few of them. The Quran says: *They (the angels) do what they are bidden to do* (66:7) which implies that the angels cannot act of their own free will. They have no will of their own, but passively perform the functions allotted to them by Providence. On the other hand, man, endowed with volition and free choice, differs from angels in that he has capabilities which make him a perfect manifestation of all divine attributes. A saying of the Holy Prophet—“the best morals in man are those which are in conformity with the great attributes of God” (*Ummāl*, ii. 2)—also points to this. As God is Merciful, we should also show mercy to men; as He is Forgiving, so we must also be ready to forgive our

33. They said, 'Holy art Thou! No knowledge have we except what Thou hast taught us; surely, Thou art the All-Knowing, the Wise.'³⁹

قَالُوا سُبْحَنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٩﴾

fellow beings; as He connives at faults, so we must try to imitate Him in this particular; and as He protects the weak, so we must be ready to protect the weak, and so on. This injunction of the Holy Prophet justifies the inference that man has the capability to manifest in himself all the attributes of God. Thus, both the Quran and the Holy Prophet's sayings are agreed that man and angel differ in the manifestation of divine attributes, and the "names" in the clause, *He taught Adam all the names*, refer to the attributes of God. The verse means that God first implanted in Adam free will and the needful capacity for the comprehension of the various divine attributes, and then gave him the knowledge of those attributes, which was impossible without the power of assimilation.

The verse that follows corroborates this meaning; for therein it is stated that the *اسماء* (attributes) were such as were not wholly known to the angels and it is evident that such *اسماء* are only the divine attributes.

The word *اسماء* may also mean the qualities of the different things in nature. As man was to make use of the forces of nature, God gave Adam the capacity of knowing their qualities and properties.

The word *كُلُّ* (all) used here does not imply absolute totality. It simply means all that was necessary. The Quran uses this word in this sense elsewhere also (see 6:45; 27:7, 24; 28:58).

The pronoun in the words *عرضهم* (*He put the objects of these names*) shows that the objects referred to here are not inanimate things; for in Arabic this form of pronoun is used only for rational beings. The meaning of the expression, therefore, would be that God showed Adam in a *kashf* (vision) certain human beings from among his progeny who were to be the manifestations of divine attributes in the future. Such beings were the Prophets or other holy persons who were to enjoy such nearness to God as to become His image and through whom God was to reform mankind. The angels were then asked whether they could manifest the divine attributes like them. This is what is meant by the words, *Tell Me the names of these*, occurring in the present verse.

39. Important Words :

سُبْحَانَكَ (Holy art Thou). The word *سُبْحَانَ* is the infinitive of *سَبَّحَ* for which see 2: 31. The infinitive form is used to intensify the meaning.

Commentary :

As the angels were conscious of their nature and limitations, they frankly confessed that they were unable to reflect God's attributes as man could do, i.e., they could reflect only such of His attributes as He, in His eternal wisdom, had given them the power of reflecting. Man was a fuller image of God than the angels, or, for that matter, any other created being. Says God: *We have created man in the best of constitutions* (95:5).

34. He said, 'O Adam, tell them their names ;' and when he had told them their names, He said, 'Did I not say to you, I know the secrets of the heavens and of the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal ?'⁴⁰

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ
قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

40. Important Words :

تَكْتُمُونَ (you conceal) is derived from كَتَمَ meaning, he concealed. They say كَتَمَ الشَّيْءَ i.e. he concealed or suppressed the thing. The Arabs use the expression كَتَمَ الرِّبْوَةَ (he suppressed his breath) of a horse who, after running some distance, begins to pant, but having small nostrils, his breath remains, as it were, suppressed or concealed within him (Lane under كَتَمَ). So كَتَمَان (the act of concealing or suppressing) need not be deliberate or the result of a desire or attempt to conceal. It may merely be the result of circumstances or only the outcome of nature without an attempt or desire to that effect.

Commentary :

When the angels confessed their inability to manifest in themselves all the attributes that Adam could manifest, the latter, in obedience to the divine will, manifested the different capabilities ingrained in him and showed to the angels the extensiveness of his natural capacities. Thus man proved the necessity of a being who might secure from God the faculty of volition or the power of will by means of which he might voluntarily take to righteousness, (or, for that matter, to sinning) and might thereby reveal to the world the glory and the greatness of God.

The words, *and I know what you reveal and what you conceal*, mean that God knew

which divine attributes the angels manifested in themselves and which they were incapable of manifesting.

The words, *what you conceal*, do not mean that the angels had a desire for, or that they made an attempt at concealment ; for, as explained under Important Words, the word كَتَمَان (concealing) is also used to denote a state of affairs without there being any attempt or desire on one's part to conceal or suppress anything. The words, *what you conceal*, therefore, refer to such attributes of God as the angels are unable to reflect in their own being on account of their natural inaptitude. It is a gross error to take the words, *what you reveal and what you conceal*, as signifying that the angels were not telling the whole truth before God.

As already pointed out under 2 : 31, the conversation between God and angels and Adam, as mentioned in the verse, need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense. Sometimes the word قَالَ (he said) is used to describe the practical upshot of events without there being any actual speech or dialogue, the purpose of such narration being only to show the existing condition of things in a vivid and graphic form and nothing more. A poet says : قَالَتْ لَهُ الْعَيْنَانِ i.e. "Both of his eyes said, 'We will listen and obey,'" whereas the eyes have no speech. Thus the conversation embodying the story of Adam may also be nothing more than a portrayal in words.

35. And *remember the time* "when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they *all* submitted. But Iblis did not. He refused and was too proud; and he was of the disbelievers."⁴¹

وَاذْكُرْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِسْجُدُوْا اٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْا اِلَّا اِبْلٰسَ
اَبٰى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

7: 12, 13; 15: 29—33; 17: 62; 18: 51; 20: 117; 38: 72—77.

41. Important Words :

اسجدوا (submit) is derived from سجد which means: (1) he humbled or submitted himself; (2) he bowed; (3) he prostrated himself. They say سجدت السفينة للرياح which means, the boat bowed before the wind i.e. it followed the direction of the wind (Aqrab); (4) the word also means, he obeyed and worshipped (Mufradāt).

الا (but) is used to signify the sense of exception. In Arabic استثناء (exception) is of two kinds: (1) استثناء متصل i.e. an exception in which the thing excepted belongs to the same class or species to which the things from which an exception is sought to be made, belong, as we say جاء القوم الا زيدا i.e. all the people came except Zaid. Here Zaid belongs to the same class to which the people belong. (2) استثناء منقطع i.e. an exception in which the excepted thing belongs to a different class or species, as they say جاء القوم الا حمارا i.e. all the people came except the donkey. Here the donkey does not belong to the class or species from which exception is sought to be made. In the verse under comment the word الا denotes the latter kind of exception, Iblis not being one of the angels.

ابليس (Iblis) is derived from ابلس which means: (1) his good or virtue became less or decreased; (2) he gave up hope or he despaired of the mercy of God; (3) he became broken in spirit and mournful; (4) he was perplexed and was unable to see his way; (5) he was or became silent on account of grief or despair; (6) he was cut short or silenced in argument; (7) he became unable to prosecute his journey; (8) he was prevented

from attaining his wish. ابليس (Iblis) is generally considered to be a name of Satan (Lane). Based on the root meaning of the word, ابليس is a being who contains little of good and much of evil and who, on account of his having despaired of God's mercy, owing to His disobedience, is left perplexed and confounded and unable to see his way. Iblis is often considered identical with Satan, but is in some cases different from him, as will appear from the following commentary.

كان (was) is a very common word of the Arabic language giving a vast variety of meanings some of which are: (1) he or it was; (2) he or it is; (3) he or it shall be; (4) he or it came into being; (5) he or it became; etc. The word is also used to express a permanent attribute or quality, as the Quran says: كان الله علما حكما i.e. Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. The expression ما كان لبي ان يكون له اسرى means, it does not behove a Prophet, or it does not become a Prophet, or it is not right or proper for a Prophet that captives be taken for him (8: 68). The clause ما كان لبي ان يفعل means, it is impossible for a Prophet to act dishonestly, or a Prophet cannot act dishonestly (3: 162) (Aqrab, Mufradāt, Tāj & Kashshāf).

Commentary :

When Adam became an image of the attributes of God, and attained the rank of a Prophet, God ordered the angels to serve him. The words اسجدوا آدم do not mean, "Fall prostrate before Adam." The Quran definitely says: *Prostrate not yourselves before the sun, nor before the moon, but prostrate yourselves before Allah, Who created them* (41: 38). Thus

prostration before Adam by way of worship is opposed to the teachings of the Quran, and a command to that effect could never proceed from God. The word سجدة has been used here in the sense of "obedience," and "submission." Thus the verse means that God bade the angels serve Adam, that is, assist him in his mission. In this way, the angels are ordered to serve all the Prophets of God, their chief duty being to help the cause of a Prophet and to draw the hearts of men towards him.

ابليس (*Iblīs*), it must be clearly understood, was not one of the angels, because, whereas *Iblīs* has been here described as disobeying God, the angels have been described as ever 'submissive' and 'obedient.' Says the Quran: *They disobey not Allah in what He commands them, and do what they are commanded* (66:7). Hence ابليس could not be an angel. The objection, why was God angry with *Iblīs* whereas the commandment stated in this verse was meant for the angels and not for him, is baseless, for elsewhere the Quran makes it clear that *Iblīs* was also commanded to serve Adam. God says: *What prevented thee (O Iblīs,) from submitting (to Adam) when I commanded thee?* (7:13). This shows that *Iblīs*, though not an angel, was also ordered to make submission to Adam. Moreover, even if there were no separate commandment for *Iblīs*, the one for angels must be taken to extend to all others, because angels being the custodians or guardians of the different parts of the universe, the commandment given to them automatically extends to all.

As to the identity of *Iblīs* it may be briefly stated that, as described under Important Words, *Iblīs* is really an attributive name given, on the basis of the root meaning of the word, to the Evil Spirit opposed to the angels. *Iblīs* has been so named because he possesses the attributes enumerated under Important Words above, particularly the quality of being deprived

of good and of being left bewildered in the way and of despairing of God's mercy.

That *Iblīs* was not the *satan* spoken of in 2:37 below is apparent from the fact that the Quran mentions the two names side by side, wherever the story of Adam is given, but everywhere a careful distinction is observed between the two i.e. wherever the Quran speaks of the being who, unlike the angels, refused to serve Adam, it invariably mentions the name *Iblīs*, and wherever it speaks of the being who beguiled Adam and became the means of his being turned out of حة (garden), it invariably mentions the name 'satan.' This distinction, which is most significant and has been maintained throughout the Quran i.e. in at least ten places (see 2:35, 37; 7:12, 21; 15:32; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117, 121; 38:75), clearly proves that *Iblīs*, who is mentioned side by side with the angels, is different from the 'satan' who beguiled Adam and was one of Adam's own people to whom Adam was sent as a Reformer.

Iblīs thus was not one of the angels. This is apparent from the fact that whereas the angels have been described as being always obedient to God and incapable of disobedience (16:51; 66:7), *Iblīs* has been spoken of as having arrogantly disobeyed a clear commandment of God (7:12, 13). Elsewhere, the Quran speaks of *Iblīs*, saying: *He (Iblīs) was one of the jinn (a secret creation); then he chose to disobey God's order* (18:51). From the above it is clear that though not one of the angels, *Iblīs* belonged to a secret creation of God who, unlike the angels, was capable of obeying or disobeying the Lord, as he liked. The Quran further makes it clear that when *Iblīs* insolently disobeyed God, He turned him away and cursed him for his rebellious attitude, whereupon *Iblīs* took the vow that he would thenceforward take to misleading men and hindering them from following the right way (7:17, 18; 15:35, 36, 40; 17:63). Elsewhere the Quran says: *Then said We to the angels,*

36. And We said, 'O Adam, "dwell thou and thy wife in the garden, and eat therefrom plentifully wherever you will, but approach not this tree, lest you be of the wrongdoers.'⁴²

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا
رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا

مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

^a7 : 20, 23 ; 20 : 117, 118.

'Submit to Adam ;' and they all submitted. But Iblis did not ; he would not be of those who submit. God said, 'What prevented thee from submitting when I commanded thee' ? He said, 'I am better than he. Thou hast created me of fire while him hast Thou created of clay.' God said, 'Then go down hence, it is not for thee to be arrogant here. Get out ; thou art certainly of those who are abased.' He said, 'Grant me respite till the day when they will be raised up.' God said, 'Thou shalt be of those who are given respite.' He said, 'Now since Thou hast adjudged me as lost, I will assuredly lie in wait for them on Thy straight path. Then will I surely come upon them from before them and from behind them and from their right and from their left, and Thou wilt not find most of them to be grateful.' God said, 'Get out hence, despised and banished. Whosoever of them shall follow thee, I will surely fill Hell with you all.' (7 : 12—19). Elsewhere God says to Iblis : Surely, thou shalt have no power over My servants except such of the erring ones as choose to follow thee (15 : 43). At yet another place, God says that Iblis was one of the jinn i.e. a secret creation (18 : 51). And about the jinn God says : I have created the jinn and men only that they may serve Me (51 : 57).

As to the presence of good and evil in the world, it may be said that out of His infinite wisdom God has made man a free agent, giving him the power either to take the right path or be led into the wrong one as he likes. This system in which angels and Iblis both take part is quite in the fitness of things and is for

man's own good ; for without being a free agent man cannot deserve praise or be entitled to reward for his good actions ; and if man is to become entitled to reward for good actions, he needs must also be responsible for his sins and shortcomings, because his being a free agent must function both ways.

God has done more. He gives every man a good start in life by giving him a good and virtuous nature, and it is man himself who afterwards spoils the goodness of his nature and takes an evil course. Says the Holy Prophet : "Every child is born with a good nature (i.e. the nature of Islam) ; it is his parents who later make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian" (Bukhārī). God further raises Prophets and sends down His revelation for the reformation of mankind so that, if through their own free choice or under the influence of some evil spirits or bad associates, men should go astray, they may thereby be called back to truth. See also note on 'Satan' under 2 : 37.

42. Important Words :

شجرة (tree) is the singular of شجر (trees). It is derived from the verb شجر. The Arabs say شجر الامر بينهم i.e. the affair or case became complicated and confused so as to be a subject of disagreement and difference between them. شجرة means, a tree, because of the intermixing or confusion of its branches. شجرة also signifies, the stock or origin of a man. They say, هو من شجرة طيبة i.e. he is of a good stock or origin (Lane).

ظالمين (wrongdoers) is the plural of ظالم being derived from ظلم which means: (1) he put a thing in the wrong place or in a place not its own; (2) he made one suffer loss; (3) he transgressed or committed a wrong. A ظالم is thus one who does an inappropriate or improper thing; or one who commits a wrong; or one who makes someone suffer a loss (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

The word جنة (garden) occurring in this verse does not refer to Heaven or Paradise but simply to the garden-like place where Adam was first made to live. It cannot refer to Heaven: firstly, because it was on the earth that Adam was made to live, as the words, *I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth*, occurring in 2:31 clearly indicate.

Secondly, Heaven is a place from which no one who once enters it will ever be expelled (15:49), whereas Adam was made to quit the جنة (garden) spoken of in this verse. This shows that the جنة or garden in which Adam first dwelt was a place on this very earth which was given this name on account of the fertility of its soil and the abundance of its verdure. Recent researches go to show that the place where Adam was made to dwell was the garden of Eden which lay near Babylon in Iraq or Assyria.

According to the Bible, the forbidden شجرة (tree) was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). But we learn from the Quran that after having eaten of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve became naked which means that, unlike knowledge which is a source of goodness, the tree was a source of evil, making Adam exhibit a weakness. The Quranic view is evidently correct, because to deprive man

of knowledge was to defeat the very purpose for which he had been brought into being. The Quran and the Bible seem, however, to agree on the point that the tree was not a real one, but only a symbol, because no tree with either of the above characteristics i.e. making a man naked or giving him knowledge of good or evil, exists on the face of the globe. So the tree must represent something else.

As explained above, the word شجرة also means a quarrel. Says the Quran: *But no, by thy Lord, they are not believers until they make thee judge in all that is in dispute between them* (4:66).

Elsewhere, the Quran makes mention of two kinds of شجرة (1) شجرة طيبة (good tree) and (2) شجرة خبيثة (evil tree) for which see 14:25 & 27. Pure things and pure teachings are likened to the former, and impure things and impure thoughts are likened to the latter. In the light of these explanations, the verse would mean: (1) that Adam was enjoined to avoid quarrels; (2) that he was warned against evil things, because although the verse does not specify evil or good, yet the prohibition cannot but refer to impure and evil things.

The expression, *eat therefrom plentifully wherever you will*, indicates that the place where Adam lived had not yet come under the jurisdiction of anybody and was what may be termed "God's land" which was given to Adam who was thus made lord of all he surveyed.

The concluding clause, *lest you be of ظالمين or wrongdoers*, means that the result of approaching the prohibited شجرة would be that Adam would become one of those who do not observe propriety in their actions; for, as explained under Important Words, ظالم means, putting a thing at a wrong place.

37. But "Satan caused them both to slip by means of it and drove them out of the state in which they were. And We said, 'Go forth; some of you are enemies of others and for you there is an abode in the earth and a provision, for a time.'⁴³

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ
وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

^a7 : 21, 28 ; 20 : 121. ^b2 : 62 ; 7 : 25 ; 20 : 124. ^c7 : 25, 26 ; 20 : 56 ; 77 : 26, 27.

43. Important Words :

ازلما (caused them both to slip). ازل is derived from زل i.e. he slipped. ازل means : (1) he caused him to slip ; (2) he turned him from the truth or from the right path (Aqrah). The word زل is sometimes used of slipping without intention (Mufradāt).

اهبطوا (go forth) is derived from هبط meaning, he descended or alighted or went down. But when the word is followed by the preposition من it generally means, he went forth or he departed. Thus هبط من الوادي means, he went forth from the valley (Baqa). Arabic grammar, however, permits of the preposition being omitted. Thus the word اهبطوا in the present verse would mean, go forth or depart. Further on (in 2:39) we read اهبطوا منها which means, go out of it or go forth from it.

مستقر (abode) is derived from استقر which again is derived from قر. They say استقر بالمكان or قر في المكان i.e. he stayed or became established in the place ; he adopted the place as his residence. So مستقر means, a place where one resides or abides for some length of time (Aqrah).

متاع (provision) is derived from منع. They say منع الله بكذا i.e. God made him profit by it for some length of time. So متاع means : (1) any of the necessities of life like food, clothes and furniture ; (2) goods of the world ; (3) any short-lived profit that does not last for long (Aqrah). The word also means, deriving benefit from a thing for some length of time (Mufradāt).

Commentary :

The pronoun "it" in, *caused them both to slip by means of it*, evidently refers to the شجرة or tree. The first two clauses of the verse mean that a satanic being enticed Adam and his spouse from the place where they were and thereby deprived them of the comforts they enjoyed. As explained in 2:35 above, it will be noted that he who beguiled and brought trouble on Adam was *Shaitān* and not *Iblīs*, who is spoken of as refusing to serve Adam. This distinction is to be found not only in the verse under comment but throughout the Quran which invariably speaks of *Iblīs* while mentioning the incident of refusal to bow down through pride, and of *Shaitān* wherever mention is made of Adam being instigated to eat of the prohibited شجرة (tree). The distinction points to the conclusion that the word *Shaitān* does not here refer to *Iblīs*, but to some one from among the fellow-beings of Adam who was hostile to him. The inference is further supported by the verse: *As to My servants, thou (O Iblīs) shalt certainly have no power over them* (17:66). As Adam was a vicegerent of God, *Iblīs* could have no power over him, and the being who beguiled him was someone else. Hence, in order to bring out this fact, the word *Shaitān*, which has a much wider significance than *Iblīs*, has been used here.

The concluding words of the verse, i.e., *for you there is an abode in the earth*, also prove that the Quran lends no support to the

38. Then Adam learnt from his Lord ^acertain words of prayer. So ^bHe turned towards him with mercy; Surely He is Oft-Returning with compassion, and is Merciful.⁴⁴

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣٨﴾

^a7 : 24. ^b20 : 123.

idea of anybody ascending to the heavens alive, for the verse clearly fixes the earth as the life-long abode of man. Thus the Quran rejects the idea that Jesus or, for that matter, anybody else ever went up to the heavens alive.

A short note here on the word 'Satan' will not be out of place. As will be readily seen, the word 'Satan' is of much wider significance than *Iblīs*, for whereas *Iblīs* is the name given to the Evil Spirit who belonged to the *jinn* and refused to serve Adam, thereafter becoming the leader of the forces of evil in the universe, the word 'Satan' is used about any evil or harmful being or thing, whether a spirit or a human being or an animal or a disease or any other thing. Thus *Iblīs* is a 'satan'; his comrades and associates are 'satans'; enemies of truth are 'satans'; mischievous men are 'satans'; injurious animals are 'satans' and harmful diseases are 'satans.' The Quran, the Ḥadīth and the Arabic literature are full of instances in which the word 'satan' has been freely used about one or all of these things. Thus the Quran says that there are 'satans' both among men and the *jinn* (6:113). Again, mischievous enemies of truth are also called 'satans' in the Quran (2:15). The Holy Prophet once used the name 'satan' about a thief who had repeatedly robbed Abū Huraira (Bukhārī). Similarly the Holy Prophet once said that a black street dog was a 'satan' (Mājah). Again he once ordered his Companions to cover up their utensils containing food and drink lest 'satan' should find its way into them, evidently meaning harmful insects and germs

(Mājah). At another place the Holy Prophet exhorts his followers to clean their nostrils when they rise from sleep in the morning as 'satan' rests in them, hinting that harmful matter accumulates in the nostrils which, if not removed, may injure health (Muslim).

From the above instances it is clear that 'satan' is a very general term and is freely used about all evil or harmful beings or things. For the meaning of the word 'Satan' see note on 2:15.

44. Important Words :

تلقى (learnt) is derived from تلقى. They say تلقى فلان i.e. he came face to face with him; he met him or he saw him; he found him. لقاء الشيء means, he threw or pushed the thing towards him; he made him meet it or he made him experience it. ألقاه means, he threw it or put it or let it fall. ألقاه القول means, he told or communicated to him the word. ألقاه عليه رحمه means, he bestowed his mercy on him. تلقى الشيء means, he came face to face with it; or he met it or saw it. تلقى منه الشيء means, he received the thing from him; or he learnt it from him (Aqrab).

كلمات (words) is, like كلم, the plural of كلمة which is derived from the verb كلم. They say كلمه meaning, he wounded him; كلمه (Kallamahū) means, he wounded him; he spoke to him. كلمه means, he spoke to him; the latter expression being generally used of two or more persons speaking to one another. تكلم means, he spoke, he uttered words. كلام means, saying or speech having some meaning; idea occurring in the mind even if it is not expressed;

39. We said, 'Go forth, all of you, from here. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso shall follow My guidance, on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve.'⁴⁵

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى
فَمَن تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

47 : 36 ; 20 : 124.

a writing. كلمة means, word; anything uttered; speech (Aqrah). كلمة also means, a decree; a commandment (Mufradāt).

تاب (he turned) and تواب (Oft-Returning) are both derived from the same root. تاب means, he repented. تاب الى الله means, he returned to God with repentance after being disobedient or sinful. تاب الله عليه means, God turned to him with forgiveness and mercy. تائب means, one who repents or turns towards God after being disobedient or sinful. توبة means, repentance; turning towards God for forgiveness with the resolve to be obedient and righteous in future. تواب is intensive adjective from تاب. When applied to man it means, one who is always ready to repent, one who turns to God much for forgiveness and with promise to reform. When applied to God, it means, He Who is ready to accept repentance; He Who turns (much and often) with forgiveness and mercy towards His servants (Aqrah & Lane).

Commentary :

This verse tells us that when 'satan' deceived Adam, and God informed him of his mistake, he prayed to God for forgiveness in words which he learnt from God Himself. These words have been mentioned by the Quran elsewhere and they run thus: *Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost* (7 : 24).

This was the prayer that Adam learnt from God. The prayer was heard and Adam was forgiven. The fact that God Himself taught Adam the words of this prayer shows that

he was a chosen one of God and was a recipient of divine revelation. The verse also tells us that on special occasions God Himself teaches His servants the words in which they should pray to Him, and it is evident that the words of prayer chosen by God are sure to find ready acceptance with Him. It is in fact a way of honouring holy men and expediting their reconciliation with Him that God sometimes teaches them the words in which they should pray to Him. It is, in other words, saying to them, "Come to Me with a request and I will grant it." Strange indeed are the ways of the Lord Whose mercy and forgiveness are, as it were, always eager to descend on man, if he only cares to turn towards Him with repentance. Says the Holy Prophet, "God has spoken to me saying: 'Whoso does a good deed will have a tenfold reward and even more, and whoso does an evil deed will have a punishment only equal to it or will have his sin forgiven altogether. And whoso approaches Me by half a cubit, I will go to him by one cubit and whoso approaches Me by one cubit, I will go to him by four cubits; and whoso comes to Me walking, I will go to him running'" (Muslim).

45. Important Words :

خوف (fear) is derived from خاف i.e. he feared. خوف denotes fear about the future.

يحزنون (shall grieve) is derived from حزن which means, he felt regret, grief, and sorrow. حزنه means, he made him sorrowful. حزن (grief) generally, though not always, relates to what is past.

40. But "they who will disbelieve and treat Our signs as lies, these shall be the inmates of the Fire ; therein shall they abide.⁴⁶

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

R. 5 41. O children of Israel! ^bremember My favours which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you, and Me alone should you fear. ⁴⁷

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّخِذُوا

^a7 : 37. ^b2 : 48, 123 ; 5 : 21 ; 14 : 7.

Commentary :

As Adam was to become the progenitor of a great race and the harbinger of a new era, a timely announcement was made to mankind through him that they should be prepared to receive guidance from their God from time to time. Thus the verse holds out the promise that among the descendants of Adam there would continue to appear great souls who would invite people to truth and guidance, and that those who followed such holy persons would attain salvation. Their hearts would be so filled with the true faith that they would enjoy peace and tranquillity of mind in all circumstances. No fear about the future or regret about the past would trouble them, as they would attain nearness to God and their hearts would be to them a paradise.

46. Important Words :

خالدون (shall abide). For the meaning of خلود see under 2 : 26.

Commentary :

Along with the glad tidings given in the preceding verse, a warning is issued in the present verse for such people as might reject God's guidance. They will fall into a fire and will never enjoy inward happiness and satisfaction of mind, however rich and wealthy they may happen to be. In the next world too, both those who follow the guidance and those

who reject it will have the reward and retribution of their deeds.

The last clause of the verse, viz., هم فيها خالدون i.e. therein they shall abide, does not mean that they will remain in Hell for ever. Islam does not believe in the eternity of Hell, but looks upon it as a sort of hospital where men will be sent for treatment and cure. The God of Islam is most merciful and not vindictive, and does not delight in inflicting punishment on His creatures. On the other hand, His punishment comes only when it becomes absolutely essential and then too it is intended only for the reformation of His creatures. The punishment whether of this world or of the next is not based on the motive of revenge, but both here and hereafter its underlying purpose is to inflict pain with the ultimate object of healing and curing, so that when this purpose has been fulfilled, it will become unnecessary and will be stopped. Accordingly, Islam teaches that there will come a time when the dwellers of Hell, after having been cured of their spiritual diseases, will leave it for Heaven (see under 11 : 108, 109). In contrast to this, the reward of Heaven is truly everlasting (11 : 109).

47. Important Words :

إسرائيل (Israel) is another name of Jacob, son of Isaac. This name was bestowed by God on Jacob later in life (Gen. 32 : 28). The original

Hebrew word is a compound one made up of *إسرائيل* and *إيل* and means: (a) God's prince; (b) God's warrior; (c) God's soldier (Concordance by Cruden and Hebrew-English Lexicon by W. Gesenius). The name Israel is used to convey three different senses: (1) Jacob personally (Gen. 32:28); (2) progeny of Jacob (Deut. 6:3, 4); (3) any righteous and God-fearing person or people (Hebrew-English Lexicon).

اذكروا (remember) is derived from *ذكر* meaning: (1) he spoke of; (2) he remembered, i.e. called to mind; (3) he kept in memory. Thus *ذكر* (remembrance) may either be with the tongue or with the mind or heart (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

عهد (covenant). The word *عهد* gives a number of meanings. *عهد إليه* means, he enjoined him; he put on him a responsibility; he made a covenant with him. *عهد الحرمه* means, he observed and protected the sanctity of a thing. *عهد زيدا مكان كذا* means, he met Zaid at such and such a place. *العهد* means, an injunction; a commandment; a responsibility; a covenant; a promise; fulfilment of a promise; an oath; observance of the sanctity of a thing; protection; meeting with a person or thing; etc. (Lane & Aqrab). In the present verse *عهدى* does not mean, My part of the covenant, because the Israelites could not be asked to fulfil what God had promised. It means, the covenant you made with Me. Similarly *عهدكم* means, My covenant with you and not your covenant with Me.

فارهبون (Me should you fear) is really a combination of three words i.e. *ف* (so) and *ارهبوا* (you should fear) and *ن* (Me), the last named being originally *نى*. Added to the preceding word *اياى* (Me) the clause receives a sort of triple emphasis.

Commentary :

In the preceding verse the Quran, by a reference to Adam, draws the readers' attention to the

fact that God has been sending down His revelation from the very beginning and that evil-minded people have always opposed such revelation and that thus the Quranic revelation and the hostility of some people towards it are not to be wondered at.

In the present verse God addresses the Israelites in order to point to the fact that the revelation has not been confined to the beginning of the world but has been sent down repeatedly, as and when required, and that a very good example of this repetition is to be met with in the history of the Israelites. Side by side with this reference to the Israelites, it is also pointed out that even the Israelites have now lost God's favour by failing to fulfil His covenant and that God has therefore now decided to choose a new people for His favour. Another reason why the Israelites have been mentioned here is that, being the last people to receive the favours of God before Islam, they are more answerable to Him than any other people.

As to the question that naturally arises here, why God addresses the Jews in this verse as "the children of Israel" and not as "the children of Jacob" or simply as "the Jews," it may be stated that Israel, being the name given to Jacob by God Himself, has been preferred to the name Jacob which was apparently given him by his parents. Moreover, Israel, being an attributive name meaning "God's warrior," has been chosen to remind the Jews that, being the children of a great soldier of God, they should also behave like brave men and, throwing aside all petty considerations, should come forward and accept the Prophet whom God has raised for their own good. The form *يا بني اسرائيل* (O ye children of Israel), is similar to addressing a man as *يا ابن الكريم* (O you the son of a noble man), which expression we use when we wish to appeal to him to show nobility and generosity just as his noble father before him used to do.

As to the other name "Jews," it may be noted that both "Israel" and "Jews" are attributive names which have come to be used as proper names. Where the Quran desires to refer to the followers of Moses as a community descended from one common ancestor, it speaks of them as "children of Israel," and where it desires to refer to them as a religious unit it uses the name "Jews," the word *يهود* or *هود* (derived from *هاد*) meaning a people that turn to God or to the truth with repentance. Or, as some people have thought, *يهود* is derived from *يهودا* (Judah) who was one of the sons of Jacob. As Judah's descendants together with those of his brother, Benjamin, constituted the kingdom of Judah at Jerusalem, as opposed to that of the remaining ten tribes of Israel, collectively known as Israel, and as Jerusalem became the religious centre of the Jews, therefore the Jewish religion came to be known as Judaism and the people professing that religion as *يهود* or Jews (*Enc. Brit.* under Jews).

The "favours" spoken of in the verse include both spiritual and temporal favours, of both of which the Israelites had their share. Says the Quran: *And remember when Moses said to his people, 'O my people, call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings' (5:21).* This verse makes it clear that the highest spiritual favour is prophethood and the highest temporal favour is kingship and both these favours were bestowed on the Israelites. The facts of history bear out that assertion.

The words *ارفوا بعهدي اوف بعهديكم* have been rendered in the text as, *fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you*, but perhaps a simpler rendering would be, "fulfil My commandments, I will fulfil the promise I made to you." As for the covenant spoken of in this verse, we read in the Quran that, when Abraham enquired of God whether the promise which He had made to him about making him

an *Imām* or leader of the people applied to his posterity also, God said, *My covenant does not embrace the transgressors (2:125)* which implied that the covenant applied only to the righteous children of Abraham.

The Bible also refers to this covenant in Gen. 17:4—14 where God says to Abraham, "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. . . . And I will make thee exceeding fruitful and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee. . . . This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. . . . And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The circumcision here spoken of is treated as a symbol of spiritual purification in the scriptures (Lev. 26:41 & Jer. 4:3, 4; 9:25). The Jews retained the outward form of the rite of circumcision but neglected the inner spirit, while Christians neglected both.

After Abraham the covenant was renewed with the Israelites. This second covenant is mentioned in the Bible in several places (Exod. 20; Deut. Chaps. 5, 18, 26). God gave Moses on Mount Sinai (or Horeb as it is called in Deut.) the Ten Commandments and made a covenant with the Israelites (Deut. 5:2, 3). They were commanded to keep this covenant thus: "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you and that ye may prolong your days in the land ye shall possess" (Deut. 5:33). And again "Thou (O Israel!) hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His

voice : and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people as He has promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all His commandments" (Deut. 26 : 17, 18).

When the covenant was being made and the glory of God was manifesting itself on Mount Sinai, the Israelites were so terrified to see "the thunders and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking" (Exod. 20 : 18) that accompanied this manifestation that they exclaimed to Moses, saying: "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. 20 : 19). These words sealed the fate of the Israelites; for thereupon God said to Moses that, though the Israelites would be blessed as long as they acted upon the commandments revealed through him, in future no Law-giving Prophet, just as he was, would appear among them. Such a Prophet—a Law-giving Prophet like unto him—would in future appear from among the brethren of the Israelites *i.e.* the Ishmaelites. Says Moses: "And the Lord said unto me, they have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him (Deut. 18 : 18, 19).

In the foregoing verses, the Israelites are told that as they themselves refused to listen to the word of God, the next Law-giving Prophet will be raised not from among them, but from among their brethren. Prophets were indeed raised among the Israelites even after Moses as the Quran itself testifies (2 : 88), but the Prophet that was to be "like Moses" *i.e.* a Law-giving Prophet, was not raised from among them in accordance with the prophecy quoted above.

The prophecy clearly stated that the next Law-giving Prophet was to be from among the "brethren" of the Israelites. Now as the Ishmaelites are the "brethren" of the Israelites, it was from among them that the Holy Prophet of Islam appeared. This is quite in conformity with the promise which was first made to Abraham himself (2 : 130).

It is wrong to say that the words "of thy brethren" may refer to the Israelites themselves; for at the time of Moses all the tribes of Israel were living together, and if the Promised Prophet was to appear from among them, it could in no sense be right to say that the Lord would raise up a Prophet from among the "brethren" of the Israelites. Neither can the prophecy apply to Jesus who, besides not being a Law-giving Prophet (Matt. 5 : 17, 18), was an Israelite and not an Ishmaelite. The prophecy was clearly fulfilled in the Holy Prophet of Arabia, who was an Ishmaelite and, like Moses, a Law-giving Prophet.

It has been objected that elsewhere the Bible speaking of this prophecy, uses the words "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren," which shows that the words apply to the Israelites themselves. But this inference is clearly wrong; for, *firstly* the words "from the midst of thee" are not God's words but only those of Moses (Deut. 18 : 15), whereas the words "from among thy brethren" are God's own words (Deut. 18 : 18); and as the prophecy is based on God's revelation and not on Moses' interpretation, the former must be assumed to be more correct. *Secondly*, even if we take the words "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren," to be correctly based on God's revelation, then also these words may be taken to apply to the Holy Prophet of Islam, for he, having been sent to all nations, may truly be looked upon as having been raised amidst each and every people of the world. In this case the words "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren" would be interpreted to give a twofold meaning:

(1) that the Promised Prophet would be raised for all the nations of the world, including the Israelites; and (2) that personally he would belong to the Ishmaelites.

As the Jews repeatedly broke God's covenant, it was transferred to the Holy Prophet and his followers. Says God in the Quran: (Moses prayed to God, saying,) *Ordain for us good in this world, as well as in the next; we have turned to Thee with repentance. God replied, I will inflict My punishment on whom I will; but My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it for those who act righteously, and pay the Zakāt and those who believe in Our Signs—those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet, the immaculate one, whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel which are with them (7 : 157, 158).*

The mention of the Holy Prophet in the Bible is to be met with in Deut. 18 wherein the Israelites are exhorted to accept the Promised Prophet so that they may receive mercy.

Again, the Quran says: *And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets: Saying, whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom and then there comes to you a Messenger fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him and help him, and He said, Do you agree and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter? They said, We agree; He said, Then bear witness and I am with you among the witnesses (3 : 82).*

From what has been said above it is clear that in the words, *and fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you*, God reminds the children of Israel that He had made a covenant with Isaac and his seed after him to the effect that if they fulfilled their covenant with Him and obeyed all His behests, He would continue to bestow His favours on them; but if they did not fulfil their covenant, they would be deprived of His

favours. Now as the Israelites utterly failed to keep the covenant, God raised the Promised Prophet from among the Ishmaelites as He had already promised, and henceforth the covenant was transferred to the followers of the new Prophet. He who obeyed the new Prophet would prosper; he who rejected him would be cut off.

The words, *fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you*, also lead to an important inference. The greatest favour bestowed by God upon the Israelites in fulfilment of His covenant with them was the gift of prophecy. They were given a Law in the form of the Torah, but this did not put an end to the appearance of Prophets among them who continued to come even after Moses. These Prophets brought no new Law but they received divine revelation and breathed a new life into their people. The Quran also refers to this favour of God upon the Israelites (5: 21). Now in the verse under comment, God holds out the promise to the Israelites that if they fulfilled their part of the covenant and believed in the Holy Prophet of Islam, He would fulfil His part i.e. continue to bestow the gift of prophecy on them as He had done in the past. This could be done only by raising from among them such Prophets as brought no new Law but simply came to serve the Law of Islam. From this it clearly follows that even in the new Dispensation inaugurated by the Holy Prophet, the gift of prophethood is still open; if it were not open, the promise of God that if the Israelites believed in the new Dispensation, the same favours which were bestowed on them in the past would be bestowed on them in the future could not hold true.

From the above it is also clear that the prophethood promised in Islam is to be like that of the Prophets who came after Moses. The latter were not Law-bearing Prophets, but simply came to serve the Law of Moses. Similarly, the prophethood promised in Islam

42. And believe in what I have sent which fulfils that which is with you, and be not the ^bfirst to disbelieve therein, and ^cbarter not My signs for a paltry price, and take protection in Me alone.⁴⁸

وَأٰمِنُوْا بِمَاۤ اَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا
اَوَّلَ كٰفِرِيْنَهٖ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِآيٰتِيْ شَيْئًا قَلِيْلًا وَّاْتٰى
فَاتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾

^a2 : 90, 98, 102 ; 3 : 4, 82 ; 4 : 48 ; 5 : 49. ^b7 : 102 ; 10 : 75. ^c2 : 80, 175 ; 3 : 200 ;
5 : 45 ; 9 : 9 ; 16 : 96.

is not to be a Law-bearing prophethood but simply a prophethood meant for the service of the Quran (See also under 1 : 7).

The concluding words, *and Me alone should you fear*, are at once a warning and an appeal to the Jews. As explained under Important Words, this clause contains triple emphasis and means somewhat like this, "Fear Me alone ; beware, and fear Me alone." The Israelites had already incurred God's anger by repeatedly breaking their covenant with Him. Now was a last chance for them, so let them fear the Lord even now and accept the new Prophet whose acceptance can yet turn the scales in their favour. It was a case of now or never.

In this connection it may also be noted that the above expression *i.e. and Me alone should you fear*, has not been used to signify that God is something to be feared. The emphasis is rather on the fact that nothing except God should be feared. Islam roots out all fears except that of God. Indeed, he who fears anybody or anything except God is not a true believer.

48. Important Words :

مصدق (fulfilling) is derived from صدق meaning, he told the truth or he was true. صدقه (*saddaqaḥū*) means, he held or declared him or it to be true. صدق زيد خالد means, Zaid said or held that what Khālid had said was true (Aqrab & Lane). The word تصديق when used about previous Prophets or previous scriptures can possibly

signify three things: (1) that the claim of the previous Prophets and the previous Books about their divine mission or divine origin is true; (2) that the teachings which they gave were true; and (3) that the prophecies which they made about the coming of some future Prophet or future revelation, etc., were true. Now the Quran and the Holy Prophet were مصدق of the previous Books and the previous Prophets in all these three senses: (1) Islam declares that all previous Prophets and all previous Books that claimed divine mission or divine origin and were believed in as such by a large number of people were indeed from God (2 : 5 ; 2 : 286); (2) it admits that the teachings of the previous Prophets and the previous Books were true, not necessarily in the form in which they existed at the time of its advent but in the form in which they were originally given (98 : 4); (3) it claims that the prophecies made by previous Books and the previous Prophets about the coming of a Prophet and the coming of a Book of divine Law were true and have been fulfilled in the Quran and the Holy Prophet of Islam. In the verse under comment the word مصدق is used in the last-mentioned sense *i.e.* fulfilling the prophecies of the previous scriptures.

Moreover, the word مصدق is here followed by the preposition لام and not با and there is a difference between simple مصدق and مصدق به and مصدق له. When the word is used in the sense of holding a thing to be true, it is either followed by no preposition or is followed by the

preposition لا. When, however, the Quran uses the word in the sense of 'fulfilling,' it is followed by the preposition لام. Even in common parlance we say جئت تصديقا لقول فلان i.e. I have come in accordance with, or to fulfil, the word of such a person.

The use of the word مصدق له in the Quran practically bears out this distinction. For instance, in 2:92 the Quran says: *And when it is said to them, 'Believe in what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us'; and they disbelieve in what has been sent down after that, yet it is the truth, fulfilling that which is with them.* This verse makes it absolutely clear what the word مصدق means when followed by the preposition لام. It undoubtedly means "fulfilling" and not "confirming" or "declaring to be true." The expression in the verse quoted above has been used as a proof of the truth of the Quran and this clearly proves that this expression (i.e. مصدق له) conveys the sense of "fulfilling," not that of "confirming;" for if a book declares the Bible to be true, that is no proof of the book being itself a revealed word of God; even an impostor can declare the previous scriptures to be true. It is only the fulfilling of the prophecies contained in the Bible that can serve as an evidence of the truth of the Quran. Thus it is clear that when the Quran speaks of its being مصدق (used with the preposition لام) of the Christian and the Jewish scriptures, it uses the word in the sense of "fulfilling" and not in the sense of "declaring to be true."

Again in 35:32 we find the same expression definitely used in the sense of 'fulfilling.' The verse runs thus: *And the Book which We have revealed to thee is the truth itself, fulfilling (مصدقا) that which is before it, i.e., fulfilling the scriptures that have gone before it.* Now in this verse مصدق cannot mean 'declaring to be true'; for in that case we shall have to admit that the Quran declares all the teachings contained in previous scriptures to be true, whereas many

of these scriptures are contradictory of one another and all of them contain at least some teachings that are opposed to the teachings of the Quran. So if the expression مصدقا له means "declaring to be true", it would signify that the Quran declares not only all the mutually contradictory scriptures to be true, but also such teachings as are opposed to its own teaching. From this it is clear that the expression مصدق له can only signify that the Quran fulfils the prophecies that were contained in the previous scriptures regarding the advent of a Law-giving Prophet and a universal Dispensation.

لا تشترى (barter not). For the meaning of the word اشترى see note under 2:17.

Commentary :

The verse under comment is a fitting complement of what has been said in the previous verse. God, the Almighty, calls upon the Israelites to accept the Holy Prophet of Islam in whom the prophecies contained in their scriptures have been fulfilled. In fact, all the previous scriptures had prophesied about the advent of a great Prophet. The Quran itself refers to this fact where it says: *And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets, saying, 'Whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom, and then there comes to you a Messenger fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him, and help him.' And He said, 'Do you agree and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter? They said, 'We agree;' He said, 'Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses' (3:82).* In this verse we have been told that every previous Prophet informed his people of the advent of a great Prophet and enjoined them to accept him when he made his appearance. As, before Islam, different Prophets were sent to different peoples, and it was only with the advent of Islam that there was to come a Prophet for all mankind, therefore it was

necessary that a covenant should have been taken from all the different peoples binding them to accept the World-Prophet when he appeared.

The advent of such a Prophet who was to gather together all nations was announced in Isaiah 42 : 1—4 in the following words :

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth : I have put my spirit upon him ; he shall bring forth judgement to the nations. He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench : he shall bring forth judgement in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth ; and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them forth” (Revised Version). Again, in Isaiah 55 : 4 we read : “Behold, I have given him for witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples” (Revised Version). Compare this with the Quran where God addresses the Holy Prophet, saying : *And how will it fare with them when We shall bring a witness from every people, and shall bring thee as a witness against these* (4 : 42). The above quoted prophecy mentioned in Isaiah cannot be supposed to refer to Jesus, for he did not claim to have been sent to all peoples. Says Jesus, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15 : 24).

In Isaiah 60 : 5—7, we read :

“Then thou shalt see and be lightened, and thine heart shall tremble and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah ; they all shall come from Sheba : They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the

flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee : they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory” (Revised Version). On this point the Quran says regarding Pilgrimage to Mecca : *And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage ; they shall come to thee on foot, and on every lean camel emaciated on account of coming through every deep and distant track* (22 : 28).

Now is there any House, except the one at Mecca, to which people repair riding on camels and where they offer sacrifices ?

Add to the above prophecies those already given under the previous verse *e.g.* the prophecy relating to the coming of a Prophet from among the “brethren” of the Israelites, etc., and the reader will at once realize that the Bible did contain prophecies about the advent of a great Prophet who was to gather together all nations, and that these prophecies have been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The words, *and be not the first to disbelieve therein*, occurring in the verse under comment call upon the Israelites to ponder over the claim of the Holy Prophet and not to be hasty in rejecting it. They have been cautioned against being hasty in rejecting the truth, for once a man rejects the truth without giving it calm and dispassionate consideration, it becomes very difficult for him to accept it afterwards. He becomes prejudiced against it. It is to this fact that the Quran refers when it says : *And We shall confound their hearts and their eyes, as they believed not therein at the first time, and We shall leave them in their transgression to wander in distraction* (6 : 111).

These words also hint at the fact that the People of the Book, being in possession of divine prophecies bearing on the advent of a great Prophet from among the descendants of Ishmael, are better fitted than others to judge of the truth of the Holy Prophet

43. And ^aconfound not truth with falsehood ^bnor hide the truth, knowingly.⁴⁹

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

^a3 : 72. ^b2 : 147, 160 ; 6 : 92.

of Islam and should therefore be the first to accept him ; at least they should not go to the other extreme and be the first to reject him.

The words, *and barter not My Signs for a paltry price*, are explained in the Quran in 4 : 78 : *Say, The benefit of this world is little*. Interpreted in this light the verse would mean "Do not forsake the truth for worldly gains," for worldly gains, however big, are but a small and passing thing when compared with the gains of the Hereafter. These words may also be interpreted to signify that people who reject the truth may secure only temporary gains, but eventually, even in this life, the tide very often turns, bringing the righteous ones in ascendance.

The concluding words, *and take protection in Me alone*, are similar in construction to those placed at the end of the preceding verse, the only difference being that here the word *ترهبون* has been replaced by the word *تقون* which gives a much wider significance than the former. For an explanation of the word *تقون* see under 2 : 3 above.

Before we pass on to the next verse, it is necessary to remove one possible misunderstanding. The Quran declares itself to be *مصدق له* of the Jewish scriptures and we have explained this expression as meaning, not that the Quran holds the previous scriptures to be true but that it has come in fulfilment of what was prophesied in them. This should not give rise to the misunderstanding that the Quran does not accept the divine origin of the previous scriptures. As a matter of fact, the Quran itself says that God's Messengers have appeared

among all the different peoples of the world (35 : 25). It also calls upon its followers to believe in all the previous revelations but this belief should be through the Holy Prophet and not independently of him (2 : 5). At the same time, the Quran criticizes and denies several teachings ascribed to the previous scriptures and claims that these teachings have been tampered with (19 : 89—92 ; 9 : 30 ; 4 : 47). Thus the position may be summed up as follows :

(1) Wherever the Quran speaks of itself as being *مصدق له* of the previous scriptures, it does not mean that it confirms their teachings but that it claims to have come in fulfilment of their prophecies.

(2) Nevertheless the Quran accepts the divine origin of all the revealed Books that were sent by God before Islam.

(3) But it does not look upon all their present teachings to be true ; for much has been tampered with and much that was meant for a specific period has now become obsolete.

49. Important Words :

تلبسوا (confound) is derived from *لبس* which means, he put on a clothing. And as a clothing serves to cover or hide the body of the person clothed, the word has also come to mean, to cover up or to hide or to confound or to make a thing mixed up or doubtful (Aqrab).

الباطل (falsehood) is derived from *بطل* which means : (1) it became corrupt, or (2) it became inoperative, or (3) it went waste and served no useful purpose. The Arabs use the expression *بطل دمه* of a murdered

44. And ^aobserve Prayer and ^bpay the Zakāt, and bow down with those who bow.⁵⁰

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

^aSee 2 : 4. ^b2 : 84, 111, 178 ; 4 : 163 ; 5 : 56 ; 9 : 11 ; 21 : 74 ; 23 : 5.

person whose blood is not avenged. The word باطل means: (1) anything opposed to حق (truth) i.e. falsehood; (2) anything that goes waste and serves no useful purpose; (3) an obsolete edict or commandment which is no longer operative (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

Here the Jews are forbidden (1) to mingle the true with the false, by quoting verses from their scriptures and putting wrong interpretations on them; and (2) to suppress or hide the truth i.e. suppress such prophecies in their scriptures as refer to the Promised Prophet.

50. Important Words :

زكاة (Zakāt) is derived from زكا i.e. he or it grew or increased or became good or purified, etc. So literally زكاة signifies : (1) increase or augmentation ; (2) purification (Lane). Technically, it signifies the obligatory alms prescribed by Islam. (See note on 9 : 60). زكاة is so called because it results in the purification of the property from which it is given and also in its increase through God's blessing (Mufradāt).

اركع (bow down) is derived from ركع which means, he bowed down. ركع الى الله means, he leaned towards God and found peace of mind in Him. ركع المصلى means, the worshipper performed the ركوع in his Prayer i.e. assumed the bowing posture. راع means, one who bows down before God or leans towards Him (Lisān & Aqrab). The Arabs used the word راع for one who worshipped God alone to the exclusion of idols (Asās). A well-known pre-Islamic poet Nābigha says :

سبلغ عذرا او نجاحا من امرء الى ربه رب البرية راع
viz. He who is راع i.e. who turns to God alone, the Creator of the world, will have a good argument in his favour and will obtain salvation.

Commentary :

In this verse the Jews are called upon to undergo a complete transformation and identify themselves with Islam not only in belief but also in practice. Only a perfect conversion can save them.

The expression, bow down with those who bow, does not mean that the Jews should bow down as in daily Prayers ; for that would be redundant, as the performance of the prescribed daily Prayers has already been mentioned in the words اقيموا الصلوة. The expression therefore means that they should completely submit to God, severing all such connections as may lead them astray from Him.

The question here arises, why does not God say "bow down with the believers or the Muslims" which would have been a much simpler construction than bow down with those who bow. The answer is that this construction has been adopted to convince the Jews that this commandment of God is not an arbitrary one but is meant for their own good, because by obeying it they would be identifying themselves with a righteous people. The word الراكعين being an attributive word also supplies an argument which the use of a proper name could not do. Moreover, by the use of this word, God has bestowed well-merited praise on the Muslims. They are, as a community, a راع people, wholly devoted to the service of the One God, having

45. "Do you enjoin others to do what is good and forget your own selves, while you read the Book? Will you not then understand? ⁵¹

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ
تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

46. And ^bseek help with patience and prayer; and ^cthis indeed is hard except for the humble in spirit, ⁵²

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى
الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

^a26 : 227 ; 61 : 3, 4. ^b2: 154 ; 7 : 129. ^c4 : 143 ; 9 : 54.

severed all connections with false deities. This extra significance could not have been secured by the use of the word *Muslim* or *Mu'min* which have come to be regarded as more or less proper names.

51. Important Words :

تَنْسَوْنَ (forget) is derived from نَسِيَ meaning: (1) he forgot; (2) he ignored; (3) he left off a thing (Aqrab).

تَعْقِلُونَ (you understand) is derived from عَقَلَ meaning: (1) he understood; (2) he realized his mistake. عَقَلَ الْعَلَامَ means, the boy reached the age of puberty. عَقَلَ الْبَعِيرَ means, he tied up the camel with a piece of rope. Thus عَقَلَ also embodies the sense of restraining (Aqrab).

بِرٍّ (good) means, acting well towards relations and others; truthfulness; fidelity; righteousness; obedience; obedience to God (Aqrab). It also means, extensive goodness or beneficence (Mufradāt).

Commentary :

The Quran questions the Jews, as if saying: Do you enjoin men to practise extensive beneficence, to deal kindly with one another, to be truthful, to act righteously and to serve and obey God, yet you neglect your own selves, while you claim to read the Book sent by God? Again, your Book contains prophecies concerning the Holy Prophet of Islam, yet you do not

accept him. Thus you break a great commandment of the Lord but bid others to observe lesser commandments. Will you not then understand? The word 'Book' here refers to the Bible, but the clause, *while you read the Book*, does not imply that all the contents of the Bible have been admitted to be true and indisputable. The words have been used with the object of bringing home to the Jews the fact that while they think they are the People of the Book, they behave like ignorant men. Should the People of the Book behave as they behave?

The words, *do you enjoin others to do what is good and forget your own selves*, may be interpreted in another way also. As explained under Important Words, the word بِرٍّ means, acting well towards relations. The Jews are thus invited to ponder over the fact whether they have acted well towards their brethren, the Ishmaelites? They went about enjoining others to act kindly towards relations but for more than two thousand years they themselves acted most shamefully towards their own kinsmen, and their rejection of the Holy Prophet was also due to the jealousy they bore towards the house of Ishmael.

52. Important Words :

صَبْرٍ (patience) means: (1) to steadily adhere to what reason and law command; (2) to restrain

47. Who know for certain that "they will meet their Lord, and that to Him will they return."⁵³

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ

رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

"2 : 224, 250 ; 11 : 30 ; 18 : 111 ; 29 : 6 ; 84 : 7.

oneself from what reason and law forbid; and (3) to restrain oneself from manifesting grief, agitation and impatience, the word being the contrary of جزع i.e. manifestation of grief and agitation (Mufradât).

خاشعين (the humble) is the plural of خاشع which is derived from خشع which means, he became lowly, humble or submissive; he exercised restraint over himself; he confided in God only, throwing himself completely at His mercy (Aqrah, Mufradât & Lisân). The verse that follows explains what God here means by the word خاشعين.

Commentary :

This verse along with the one that follows may be taken to be addressed either to the Jews or to the Muslims. In the former case, it constitutes a continuation of the address to the Israelites, meaning that the Israelites should not be hasty in rejecting the Holy Prophet but should seek to find out the truth with patience and prayer. The verse, however, ends with an expression of the fear that, as seeking to find out the truth in the aforesaid manner is difficult, the Jews perhaps will not resort to the method which only the humble adopt. Or it may be taken to be addressed to Muslims. When the Quran recounted so many hostile activities of Jews against Muslims, it was natural that the weak-minded people among the latter should begin to entertain fear of the Jews. So, as necessitated by the psychological effect of the verses on the listeners, the Quran here turns to the Muslims and gives them a message of hope and encouragement. If Muslims

acted with الصلوة and صبر (patience and prayer), they need have no fear. In other words, if they abstain from evils, and practise virtue and be steadfast and observe patience and constantly pray to God for help, He will certainly send them His help, and they will conquer all opposition.

The pronoun in the words, *this indeed is hard except for the humble in spirit*, refers either to الصلوة or to استعانة derived from the word استعينا meaning, that the act of seeking God's help through صبر and الصلوة is not an easy affair. It requires not only a righteous spirit but also one of complete restraint and trust.

53. Important Words :

ظن (know for certain) is derived from ظن which expresses two contrary meanings, sometimes implying doubt and uncertainty, and sometimes certainty and knowledge' (Aqrah). Evidently, it is in the latter sense that the word has been used in this verse.

Commentary :

This verse explains the word خاشعين (the humble) occurring in the preceding verse. God says that in His sight خاشعين are those people who have complete faith in Him and are sure of meeting Him one day. Such people have the strength of their conviction and do not falter before opposition.

The words, *they will meet their Lord*, refer to the meeting with God which holy men enjoy in this life, while the words, *to Him will they return*, refer to the complete nearness to God which such men will attain in the life to come.

- R. 6. 48. O children of Israel ! ^aremember My favours which I bestowed upon you and that ^bI exalted you above all peoples.⁵⁴

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اِسْرَآءِيْلُ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِيۤ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَ اِنِّیۡ فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾

49. And fear the day ^cwhen no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, ^dnor shall intercession be accepted for it ; nor shall ransom be taken from it ; nor shall they be helped.⁵⁵

وَ اتَّقُوا یَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِیْ نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا یُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا یُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ یُنصَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

^aSee 2 : 41. ^b2 : 123 ; 3 : 34 ; 5 : 21 ; 6 : 87 ; 7 : 141 ; 45 : 17. ^c2 : 124 ; 31 : 34 ; 82 : 20.

^d2 : 124, 256 ; 19 : 88 ; 20 : 110 ; 21 : 29 ; 34 : 24 ; 39 : 45 ; 43 : 87 ; 53 : 27 ; 74 : 49.

54. Commentary :

This verse is clearly addressed to the Jews. God here introduces the previous subject with a repetition of the words, *O children of Israel, remember My favours*, occurring in verse 41 above. But the words are not truly a repetition ; for they are followed by others which do not form part of verse 41. Thus the verse under comment serves to introduce a new point. In the earlier verse the reference in the word "favours" is to the covenant between God and the Jews, whereas the reference in the verse under comment is to the fact that God exalted the Israelites above other peoples.

In the verse under comment the Israelites are reminded that God had fulfilled His promise to them, but as they had, on their part, failed to fulfil their covenant, He had withheld from them the blessing which He had been conferring on them before. The Promised Prophet from among their brethren had come and God's covenant had been transferred to a new people. So they had no ground for complaint.

The words, *I exalted you above all peoples*, do not mean that the Israelites are superior to all peoples who have ever dwelt or will ever dwell on this planet. Such a meaning is

inconsistent with other passages of the Quran. For instance, in 3:34 it is said : *Allah did choose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān above all peoples*. As there can be only one people who can have superiority over all other peoples in the true sense of the term, evidently the word *عالمین* (peoples) here signifies peoples of that age only.

Where the Quran desires to convey the idea of real superiority over all nations, it uses other expressions. For instance, the Quran addresses the Muslims in the words : *You are the best people raised for the good of mankind* (3:111). Here the Muslims are definitely spoken of as the best nation that has ever been brought forth for the good of the world.

55. Important Words :

تَجْزِی (shall serve as a substitute) is derived from *جَزَى* which means, he or it sufficed ; he rendered satisfaction ; he paid ; he requited or recompensed. The expression *جَزَىٰ هَذَا مِنْ هَذَا* or *جَزَىٰ هَذَا عَنْ هَذَا* means, this stood in the place of that, or this served as a substitute for that (Lane & Aqrab).

شَفَاعَةٌ (intercession) is derived from *شَفَعَ* which means, he provided a thing, which was alone,

with another, or he joined up a single thing with another, so as to make it one of a pair or couple. The Arabs say *كان و ترا فشغته* i.e. it was a single thing and I joined to it another and made it one of a couple. According to Al-Rāghib الشفع signifies the adjoining a thing to its like; thus the word has the significance of likeness or similarity also. Then the verb شفع has come to mean, he interceded, because the person who intercedes for another attaches, or, as it were, joins or links up the latter to himself and thus uses his influence in his favour. Thus شفع لقمان اوى فلان الى الامير means, he interceded for such a person with the prince; he requested or prayed the prince to help or show favour to such a person on the ground that he was attached to him as a relation or friend or follower, etc. شفاعه therefore means, interceding or praying for a person to the effect that he may be shown favour or that his sins may be passed over, on the ground that he is connected with the intercessor or is like or similar to him, it being also implied that the petitioner is a person of higher position than the one for whom he pleads and is also connected with him with whom he intercedes (Aqrah, Mufradāt, Lane & Lisān).

عقل (ransom) means: (1) equity or justice; (2) equal compensation; (3) fair and equitable ransom (Aqrah).

Commentary :

The verse is important. God addresses the Israelites, who claimed to be the progeny of the Prophets, saying that though it was a fact that they were descended from holy personages and He had shown special favour to them inasmuch as He had exalted them above other peoples of the age, yet as they repeatedly broke His covenant and had begun to lead wicked lives and had finally rejected the Promised Prophet, who had made his appearance in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the Bible, they no longer deserved His blessings, but had, on the contrary, become the object of

His wrath and must be prepared to render an account of their deeds. The verse under comment calls upon the Jews to prepare themselves for the Day of Retribution when they would stand alone before God and there would be none to intercede for them or help them in any other way. The fact that they were descended from holy persons would be of no avail, nor would any substitute or ransom be accepted from them. It would indeed be a dreadful day for those who reject God's Messengers; for on that day nothing but one's own deeds would count.

As a criminal can count on four possible means of securing his release, God has mentioned all those means and has made it clear that none of them will avail him on the Day of Reckoning. The first idea that comes to the mind of a culprit is to prove that the offence alleged to have been committed by him was legally not committed by him at all. It was either committed by somebody else or, if it was in fact committed by him, it was committed at the instigation of another person, or another person undertook to shoulder his burden. Thus the culprit tries to secure his release by throwing the blame or the responsibility on somebody else. In view of this plea, the Quran says that (on the Day of Judgement) *no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul*. If a person is really sinful, the blame will surely lie on his own head and will by no means be shifted to another person. Every one will bear his own cross and there will be no atonement in the sense of one man serving as a substitute for another.

The second possible way of escape when a criminal fails to shift the responsibility to another person, is for him either to try to secure the intercession of an influential person in his favour or to enter a plea that he is related to some big personality and hence is entitled to special treatment. In reply to this, the Quran says, *nor shall intercession be*

accepted for it. As explained above, the word شفاعه here has a twofold significance: (a) that no influential person shall be allowed to intercede for a culprit; and (b) that no culprit shall himself be allowed to put in the plea that he is related to an influential person.

The third possible means of release is for the culprit to try to secure his freedom by paying a ransom. With regard to this the Quran says, *nor shall ransom be taken from it.*

Finally, when a criminal sees that all other means of escape have failed, he thinks of using force and getting his release by violence. With regard to this, the Quran says: *nor shall they be helped, i.e., they shall find no helpers against God.*

The Quran mentions these things not by way of threat but to make the Jews realize that they should not entertain false hopes. The only way open to them was to accept the Holy Prophet whom God had raised for their own good.

Here arises a very important question. What is the teaching of Islam about شفاعه (intercession)? Does Islam hold it to be quite useless and unlawful, as would appear from the verse under comment, or does it hold certain forms of شفاعه to be useful and lawful and others to be useless and unlawful? From the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith it appears that the latter view is correct and we proceed to discuss it accordingly. It should be stated at once that the word "intercession" is a very imperfect rendering of the word شفاعه. It conveys only a part of the meaning of شفاعه and that too very imperfectly.

As explained under Important Words, the root meaning of the word شفاعه is to attach or connect or join a thing, or, for that matter, to connect or join oneself with another thing or person so as to form a pair or a couple on the basis of similarity. The Quran uses the

different derivations of this word in no less than 29 different places and in all of them the root meaning of the word is retained in one form or another. The word is used in the sense of "intercession" because the person who intercedes for somebody must have a twofold connection:—

Firstly, he must have a special connection with the being or person with whom he wishes to intercede, for without such connection none dare intercede nor can intercession be fruitful.

Secondly, he must also have a special connection with the person for whom he intercedes, because none can think of interceding for a person unless he is specially connected with the latter and is akin or similar to him.

In religious terminology شفاعه means intercession with God by a holy man for a sinful person. Here too the twofold connection referred to above is essential. The holy person who intercedes with God must have a special connection with Him, enjoying His special favour and being very near and dear to Him. On the other hand, he should also have real connection with the person on whose behalf he wishes to intercede; for without such connection he cannot be properly moved to intercede nor can his intercession carry much weight with God. In fact, the intercessor, on the essential basis of the afore-mentioned double connection, approaches God saying, as it were, "My God, I come to Thee with a special request, knowing that Thou art well pleased with me and that I enjoy Thy special favour. Here is an erring man who is sincerely connected with me but in moments of weakness he has stumbled and faltered. But as Thou art kind and good to me, O Lord, be Thou kind also to this sinful servant of Thine and pardon him his sins." This is what may be termed the essence of شفاعه as taught and held lawful by Islam.

From the above significance of the word it is apparent that true شفاعه is governed by the following conditions :—

(1) He who intercedes must be very near and dear to God enjoying His special favour.

(2) The person for whom he wishes to intercede must have a true and real connection with him.

(3) The person in whose favour intercession is to be made must be on the whole a good man, only casually tempted to sin in moments of weakness; for it cannot be entertained for a moment that an habitually wicked man can enjoy a true connection with a holy person.

(4) Intercession must always be made with God's permission; for it is God alone Who knows (a) whether a so-called holy person really stands near and dear to Him, and (b) whether the person for whom intercession is being made is truly and sincerely connected with the holy man making the intercession, for there is many a connection which looks sound and genuine from outside but is rotten from within.

(5) Each and every intercession is not necessarily lawful or fruitful. Only that intercession is lawful which fulfils all the requisite conditions.

The above view finds clear corroboration in the Islamic teachings. For instance, the Quran says: *And fear the day when no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, nor shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor any شفاعه (intercession) avail it, nor shall they be helped* (2 : 124). This verse is addressed to the Jews and signifies that, as they have rejected the Holy Prophet and thus failed to form the most important of spiritual connections, therefore no other connection or intercession will avail them on the Day of Judgement. This makes it clear that شفاعه can avail only those who accept the Messenger of the day. It

cannot avail those who, by rejecting a Messenger of God, rebel against divine authority. As such people fail to form the connection that they are called upon to form, no question of شفاعه arises.

Again the Quran says: *On the Day of Judgement شفاعه (intercession) shall not avail any person except him for whom God grants permission and with whose word (i.e. with whose expression of faith) He is pleased* (20 : 110). This verse throws light on three very important points:

(a) That if, on the one hand, there are some whom شفاعه (intercession) will not avail, on the other hand, there are others whom it will certainly avail.

(b) But it will avail only those for whom God grants special permission.

(c) That such permission will be granted only in the case of those sinners whose faith at least is sound, i.e., their ايمان (faith) is true and well-founded; only in اعمال (practice) they sometimes show weakness.

At another place the Quran says: *Who is he that will intercede with God except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases* (2 : 256). This verse supplies the reason for the principle adduced in the verse quoted above. God's permission is necessary because His knowledge alone is perfect and it is only He Who knows whether the twofold connection essential for شفاعه really exists, i.e., (1) whether the holy person wishing to intercede really enjoys the special relation with God required for such intercession and, (2) whether the person for whom he wishes to intercede is truly and sincerely connected with him.

To illustrate the above point, we may well quote an incident in Noah's life. At the time of the great Deluge, he saw that his son had been caught by the surging waves and was going to be drowned. Thereupon he

turned to God, saying that the drowning boy was one of his family whom God had promised to save. Upon this God sharply reprimanded him, saying, *He is surely not of thy family; he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge. I advise thee lest thou become one of the ignorant* (11:47). This verse beautifully illustrates the philosophy of شفاعة. In a moment of great uneasiness of mind Noah interceded for his son with God but forgot to ask for His permission, whereupon God reminded him that though the boy was his son in the physical sense, he was not one in the true spiritual sense and was therefore not entitled to شفاعة which has its basis in spiritual kinship.

Having briefly explained the nature and conditions of شفاعة, we now come to the question: How many forms of شفاعة are there? A study of the relevant Quranic verses and of the attendant facts reveals that شفاعة is of three kinds:—

(1) Firstly, there is the verbal شفاعة which has been interpreted as “intercession.” In this form of شفاعة a holy person actually prays to God on the basis of his special connection with Him that a sinful person who is truly connected with him may be granted forgiveness or that, for that matter, a person suffering from some disease or misfortune may be restored to health or saved from the attending misfortune. In this case “intercession” is really a form of prayer but it makes a stronger appeal and is much more efficacious. For, whereas a prayer is simply a request made to God, شفاعة (intercession) is a prayer reinforced by the twofold connection referred to above. The شفيع (intercessor) appeals to God in a special way because: (a) he enjoys God’s special favour, and (b) the person for whom he intercedes is truly and sincerely connected with him. This twofold connection gives intercession a strength that is lacking in an ordinary

prayer. The intercessor, so to speak, says to God “My God, if Thou holdest me dear, then be Thou kind also to this sufferer who is dear to me.” Such a prayer, if offered with God’s permission, most forcefully moves the mercy of God and is sure of acceptance.

(2) Secondly, there is the form of شفاعة which, though verbal, yet is offered not in the form of a prayer but merely as a simple statement expressive of the relation between the intercessor and the person for whom he intercedes. Sometimes, it happens that through fear of God or through modesty the intercessor does not make an intercession in the form of a direct request or prayer but simply expresses the relation existing between him and the person for whom he wishes to intercede, leaving the conclusion to be drawn by God Himself. A case in point is that of Noah’s intercession for his son referred to above. Noah did not actually pray for his son but simply drew God’s attention to their relationship: *My Lord, verily my son is of my family and surely Thy promise is true* (11:46). These are Noah’s words. It is a clear case of شفاعة although the actual form of prayer is wanting.

(3) Thirdly, there is the شفاعة which is neither made in the form of a prayer nor expressed in words. It simply consists in the practical existence of the twofold relation necessary for شفاعة. In fact, in this case the relationship itself is spoken of as شفاعة. For instance, the Quran speaks of the Jews saying لا تنفعنا شفاعة i.e. on the Day of Judgement no شفاعة shall avail them (2:124). Here شفاعة is used simply in the sense of connection. God means to say that as the Jews have refused to connect themselves with the Holy Prophet of Islam, therefore no other connection will avail them. Their being counted among the followers of Abraham or Moses or David, etc., will be of no avail to them. In this sense a Prophet of God is a شفيع or intercessor for all his true

followers without distinction. Everybody who establishes a true connection with him is saved while others perish. In this sense God also is a شفيع; for those who connect themselves with Him are saved, while others who remain disconnected are ruined.

Now the question arises, Why has God instituted شفاعۃ at all? The answer is as follows :—

Firstly, شفاعۃ in the sense of good association is the very essence of spirituality. All spiritual progress depends on a good spiritual contact. A soul not in contact with God is lost and, for that matter, a soul not in contact with the Prophet of the day, who represents God on earth, is also lost. The Quran says, he who forms a good connection will reap the benefit thereof and he who forms an evil connection will suffer the loss attached thereto (4 : 86). Thus the need and the usefulness of شفاعۃ in the sense of a good connection is self-evident and one need not say much about it. But when we come to شفاعۃ in the sense of intercession, an explanation seems called for. When all depends on true belief and right actions, why should the necessity of intercession arise at all? Even a cursory thought leads to the conviction that this question, which has misled many, arises from the misleading conception of the word “intercession” as ordinarily understood. Unprincipled men go about interceding for criminals with unprincipled judges, thus thwarting the very ends of justice. Islamic شفاعۃ is far from this. It is not a mere intercession but is an adjunct of the principle of true belief and right actions. According to Islam only that person is entitled to شفاعۃ who is sincerely connected with the Prophet of the day, is true in faith and earnestly tries to live a righteous life according to the teachings of Islam. But, being weak, he sometimes stumbles. There is nothing inherently wrong with his connection with the Prophet, which is pure and true; only an occasional stumbling in practice

makes him fall short of the prescribed standard. God entitles such a one to شفاعۃ and that also by His special permission; and when the Knower of all things considers one to be deserving of forgiveness, who is there to object that the case is not deserving? The Islamic شفاعۃ is, in fact, only another form of repentance. For what is توبۃ (repentance) but re-forming a broken connection or tightening up a loose one? But whereas the door of repentance is closed with death, the door of شفاعۃ remains open. Moreover, شفاعۃ is a means of the manifestation of God’s mercy and God says رَحْمَتِي سَبَقَتْ غَضَبِي i.e. “My mercy is stronger than My anger” (Bukhārī). Thus شفاعۃ (intercession) is based on the manifestation of God’s mercy; and as God is not judge but مالک (Master), there is nothing to stop Him from extending His mercy to whomsoever He pleases.

Yet another reason why شفاعۃ has been allowed by Islam is that by this means God honours His Prophets. It is indeed a great honour that He should allow a person to intercede with Him.

It has been objected by some Christian critics of Islam that the doctrine of شفاعۃ is likely to encourage people to commit sins. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The شفاعۃ as allowed by Islam should encourage people to strengthen their connection with the Prophet rather than weaken it. As sin is nothing but a product of weakness in the spiritual connection, شفاعۃ and sin really stand poles apart and it is sheer ignorance to suggest that the doctrine of شفاعۃ, whose very conception rests on the soundness of man’s connection with God and His Prophet, encourages one to sin. On the contrary, it is the Christian doctrine of Atonement which throws open the flood-gates of sin; for, unlike Islamic شفاعۃ the doctrine of Atonement is based on the unnatural conception that one man can bear the sins of another. But of this more later, when we come to the relevant verses.

50. And remember the time when
 "We delivered you from Pharaoh's
 people who afflicted you with grievous
 torment, ^bslaying your sons and sparing
 your women; and in that there was a
 great trial for you from your Lord.⁵⁶

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنَ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ
 يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَجِیُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُمْ
 بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ۝۵۰

^a14 : 7 ; 20 : 81 ; 44 : 31, 32. ^b7 : 128, 142 ; 28 : 5.

Now we come to the last question in this connection, *i.e.*, who will be شفیع (intercessor) on the Day of Judgement? This question has given rise to much controversy and consequently much misunderstanding. Let it be said at once that Islam does not confine شفاعة (intercession) to one person only; for, according to the Islamic conception of شفاعة every holy person whose connection can materially influence the spiritual condition of a man is virtually a شفیع for him. All Prophets are therefore شفیع but they are شفیع only in their own respective spheres. Abraham is a شفیع for those who followed him and Moses is a شفیع for those who followed him and so on. But with the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam all other connections have come to an end; for the message of the Holy Prophet is for all time and all mankind. Even the present-day followers of Moses or Jesus cannot turn to these Prophets for شفاعة, because spiritually they are now under the regime of the Holy Prophet of Islam, the regimes of the previous Prophets having come to an end. As a matter of fact, as explained by the Quran itself, the real شفیع is God alone. Says the Quran : *There is no helper nor شفیع (intercessor) for you except Allah; will you not then ponder?* (32:5) Now as God alone is the real شفیع *i.e.* He is the One connection with Whom really matters, the Prophets of God become شفیع in a secondary way only. Whosoever among the Prophets represents God on earth at a particular time and in a particular place

becomes a شفیع for the people of that time and that place. From this it follows that the Prophets of God who passed before Islam were شفیع for their own followers and in their own time only; with the advent of Islam the period of their شفاعة came to an end. Now the Prophet of Islam is the only شفیع for all times and all peoples. Being a perfect image of God he is (1) the perfect شفیع and, having a universal mission he is (2) the universal شفیع; and having cancelled all previous connections he is now (3) the only شفیع (peace and blessings of God be on him!). For proof of the fact that the Holy Prophet has himself put forward the above claim, the reader is referred to a hadith where the aforesaid distinction of the Prophet on the Day of Judgement is most vividly set forth (Muslim ch. on *Imān*).

56. Important Words :

آل (people) is derived from the verb آل which gives the sense of returning or governing or exercising control or managing. The noun آل thus means the family or party of a man, or followers of a leader, or subjects of a ruler to whom they constantly return or who governs or exercises control over them. The word اهل is also sometimes taken to be another form of the word آل and means what the latter word means.

فرعون (Pharaoh) is not a personal name. It was the title held by the ancient kings of Egypt. Every Egyptian king is called فرعون in the Bible. The personal name of the

Pharaoh with whom Moses came in contact was Rameses II (Enc. Bib.).

يذبحون (slaying) is derived from ذبح which originally means, he slaughtered or cut open the throat of an animal, or he strangled a person to death. Here the word is used in the intensified form *dhabbaha* to signify (1) that Pharaoh and his people treated the Israelites as mere beasts, and (2) that they killed them most mercilessly. It does not mean that they actually slaughtered them like animals, for elsewhere the Quran, speaking of the same torment, uses the word يقتلون instead of يذبحون (7: 142).

نساء (women) is the plural of امرأة (a woman) from a different root. Though the word generally means "women" (Aqrab), it is also sometimes used about girls, as the Quran itself has used it (4: 128). It is also used to signify "wives" (33: 33).

بلاء (trial) means, anything by means of which a person may be tried; a trial whether through a blessing or an affliction (Aqrab).

Commentary :

In verses 41—48 God reminded the Israelites of His blessings in general, particularly the blessing of prophethood, which He had bestowed on them. He now calls their attention to such favours as exalted the Israelites above other peoples. The first of them to which God refers here is their deliverance from the hands of Pharaoh and his people, who inflicted on them grievous torments.

Some Christian critics have objected that whereas the Bible nowhere speaks of the sons of the Israelites being slaughtered like beasts, the Quran so speaks of them. We have shown under Important Words that the word ذبح used in the verse does not signify actual slaughtering by cutting the throat. It also means strangling to death. As Pharaoh first ordered the male children of the Israelites to be strangled at birth and later changed the

decree to other methods of killing, the Quran uses a word which covers all such forms of killing. As already hinted, the word ذبح in the sense of slaughtering is used figuratively to denote that Pharaoh and his people treated the Israelites most mercilessly, killing them in whatever manner they liked. Elsewhere the Quran uses the word قتل i.e. killing in place of ذبح i.e. slaughtering (7: 142).

In Exod. 1: 8—22, we read: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply. . . . Therefore they (the Egyptians) did set over them taskmasters to afflict them (the Israelites) with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Rameses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive (putting up the excuse that Israelite women being healthier than Egyptians were generally delivered before the midwives arrived). And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."

The above quotation clearly shows that the Pharaoh whose name was Rameses II not only

51. And remember the time when We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people, while you looked on.⁵⁷

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ
وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

٥٧ : 137 ; 8 : 55 ; 20 : 78, 81 ; 26 : 64—67 ; 28 : 41 ; 44 : 25.

inflicted upon the Israelites grievous torments by imposing upon them hard and disgraceful labour, but also gave orders to kill their sons and spare their daughters who were thus allowed to grow to womanhood and became نساء as the Quran puts it. The Quran uses the word ذبح to signify that at first the order was to strangle the Israelite male children at birth and when that order failed in its purpose, another was issued to the effect that all male children should be thrown into the river—a most merciless form of killing in which all human feelings were laid aside and the Israelites were treated as mere beasts.

As the word بلاء (trial) may mean either a trial through a favour or blessing, or a trial through grief or affliction, the words “in that” occurring in the verse may either refer to the deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh's people, in which case the word trial will mean a favour or a blessing; or they refer to the slaying of the male children, in which case it would mean grief or affliction.

God reminds the Israelites in the verse how He delivered them from grievous torments and afflictions and calls their attention to the magnitude of the Sign which He showed in their favour. He tells them that He had faithfully fulfilled the promises which He had made to Abraham and had left nothing undone, but when they transgressed and made an ill return for the favours that had been bestowed upon them, He withheld His favours from them and transferred the gift of prophecy to their brethren, the children of Ishmael.

God does not say that He delivered the children of Israel from Pharaoh, but that He

delivered them from “Pharaoh's people,” for it was through his people that Pharaoh inflicted torments upon them, he himself remaining in the background. Moreover, the expression آل فرعون does not exclude Pharaoh, for it, according to Arabic idiom, may also mean, Pharaoh and his people.

57. Important Words :

فَرَقْنَا (We divided) is from فرق meaning, he divided or he split. فرق الشعر means, he made parting in the hair (Aqrah).

بِكُمْ (for you) may give a number of meanings: (1) for you; (2) with you, i.e., the sea divided or receded as you proceeded, as if you were the means of dividing it; (3) because of you i.e. in order to save you; (4) in your presence i.e. while you were present (Kashshāf).

Commentary :

The incident mentioned in this verse relates to the time when, under God's command, Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to Palestine. The Israelites left secretly at night, and when Pharaoh learnt of their flight, he pursued them with his hosts in order to bring them back to bondage. The verse mentions the favour bestowed by God on the Israelites by dividing the sea for them and drowning the Egyptians. The incident is narrated in Exod. 14 : 21—30. The Bible says: “And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them."

The بحر (sea) spoken of in the Quranic verse and mentioned in the Biblical quotation given above refers to the Red Sea through which or through an extremity of which the Israelites passed in their flight from Egypt to the Holy Land (Exod. 14).

Besides the verse under comment, the Quran also speaks of this incident in 20:78, 26:64 and 44:25. Says the Quran: *And We sent a revelation to Moses, saying, 'Take away My servants by night and strike for them a dry path through the sea' (20:78). Again: Then We revealed to Moses, saying, 'Strike the sea with thy rod.' Whereupon it parted and every part was like a huge sand-hill, i.e. on one side was the sea itself, and on the other (from which the sea had receded) there loomed large depressions filled with water (26:64). And again: Take My servants away by night; for you will surely be pursued. And leave the sea motionless (i.e. pass through quickly and leave it at a time when the tide has all receded but has not yet begun to flow back, so that, on the one hand, finding the sea-bed dry and, on the other, feeling secure in the thought that the high tide was not likely to overtake them, the Egyptians might be tempted to follow on); they are a host which is doomed to be drowned (44:24, 25).*

In view of the above description, the facts appear to be as follows. When the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land, they were pursued by the army of Pharaoh. When they reached the arm of the Red Sea which lay across their route, they were greatly dismayed, for Pharaoh was close behind with his hosts. But God cheered them through Moses, asking him

to strike the water with his rod. This being the time of ebb-tide, the sea receded, exposing to view in the bed of the sea huge mounds of dry sand interspersed with depressions filled with water. Under the lead of Moses the Israelites quickly crossed the dry bed of the sea to the opposite bank. The army of Pharaoh came in pursuit, and while they were yet in the bed of the sea the high tide returned and drowned them all.

It should be remembered that, according to the Quran, a miracle is purely the work of God, and man has no hand in it. So, the striking of the sea by Moses was merely a symbol or a sign, having nothing to do with the actual parting of the sea which was exclusively the work of God, Who so arranged that it was the time of ebb-tide when Moses reached the sea so that just when He lifted his rod the sea began to recede. But when the army of Pharaoh began to cross the sea, they met with obstacles, just as heavily equipped armies generally do, and their progress was naturally retarded so that while they were yet in the midst of the sea, the high tide flowed and they were all drowned.

The words of the Quran do not lend themselves to the erroneous inference that there was an actual split in the sea to afford a passage for Moses and his followers. The two words used in the Quran in this connection are *فَرَقْنَا* (We divided) and *انْفَلَقَ* (the sea parted), the root idea of both being "parting." These two words only corroborate the theory that when the Israelites reached the sea, the ebb-tide set in and the sea parted, exposing to view the sand dunes upon which the Israelites crossed over to the other side.

The fact that Pharaoh followed Moses through the bed of the sea also indicates that it was the time of the ebb-tide. If the sea had been actually split against all known laws of nature, Pharaoh would never have dared to follow in the wake of Moses. Nevertheless, it was a

52. And remember the time when We made Moses a ^apromise of forty nights ; then you ^btook the calf for worship in his absence and you were transgressors.⁵⁸

وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

^a7 : 143. ^b2 : 55, 93 ; 4 : 154 ; 7 : 149, 153 ; 20 : 89.

great miracle brought about by a subtle combination of the laws of nature, which all united to save the Israelites and destroy Pharaoh and his people.

In this connection we may well quote an incident in Napoleon's life which goes to illustrate how the tide helped Moses and destroyed Pharaoh in their journey across the Red Sea.

In Abbot's *Life of Napoleon* it is related that, "one day, with quite a retinue, he (Napoleon) made an excursion to that identical point of the Red Sea which, as tradition reports, the children of Israel crossed three thousand years ago. The tide was out, and he passed over the Asiatic shore upon extended flats. Various objects of interest engrossed his attention until late in the afternoon, when he commenced his return, the twilight faded away, and darkness came rapidly on. The party lost their path, and, as they were wandering bewildered among the sands, the rapidly returning tide surrounded them. The darkness of the night increased, and the horses floundered deeper and deeper in the rising waves. The water reached the girths of the saddles, and dashed upon the feet of the riders, and destruction seemed inevitable. From that perilous position Napoleon extricated himself by that presence of mind and promptness of decision which seemed never to fail him. . . . The horses did not reach the shore until midnight, when they were wading breast deep in the swelling waves. The tide rises on that part of the coast to the height of 22 feet. 'Had I perished in that manner like Pharaoh,' said Napoleon, 'it would have furnished all the preachers in Christendom

with a magnificent text against me.' " (Abbot's *Life of Napoleon*, Chap. 12, p. 96).

The words, *while you looked on*, have been added in the verse to make the Israelites realize that though the above miracle was performed before their very eyes and their proud and haughty oppressor was brought to naught in their very sight, yet they proved ungrateful to their Lord and His Prophet.

58. Important Words :

ظالمون (transgressors) is the plural of ظالم which is derived from ظلم which means : (1) he put a thing at a wrong place ; (2) he transgressed against or wronged a person (Aqrah).

Commentary :

In this verse the incident of calf-worship mentioned in Exodus 32 is related. Man is generally the slave of environment. This is particularly true of a subject people, who assiduously imitate the manners and customs of their rulers. The Israelites had lived under the Pharaohs for a long time, and had imbibed the idolatrous faith of the Egyptians. When they left Egypt with Moses, and came across any idol-worshipping people on the way, they requested Moses again and again to sanction a similar worship for them (7:139). So eager were they for such worship that when Moses went to Mount Sinai, they made a calf and took to worshipping it. They revered the calf, because in Egypt the cow was held in special veneration. Egypt, like India, was an agricultural country where cattle must be of the highest value to man. Hence cow-worship.

The Bible mentions Aaron as having made a calf for the Israelites (Exod. 32 : 1—6). But

53. Then "We forgave you thereafter, that you might be grateful."⁵⁹

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

54. And remember the time when ^bWe gave Moses the Book and the ^cDiscrimination, that you might be rightly guided.⁶⁰

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

^a4 : 154. ^b2 : 88 ; 23 : 50 ; 32 : 24 ; 37 : 118 ; 40 : 54. ^c21 : 49.

the Quran strongly refutes this idea. Aaron was a Prophet of God and could not stoop to idol-worship. Says the Quran, *And Aaron had said to them before this, 'O my people, you have only been tried by means of the calf; and surely, the Gracious God is your Lord; so follow me and do as I bid you'* (20 : 91). It is strange that such baseless and incredible stories as the participation of a chosen one of God in idol-worship should find place in a Book which claims to be inspired. It only proves that the Bible has been the object of human interference. It is probable that some interested people deliberately interpolated the sacred writings and ascribed certain vices to the Prophets; and the Christian divines eagerly took them for granted, as they were of good use to them as a means of the exaltation of Jesus over the rest of the Prophets.

The verse speaks of the appointed duration as being of forty nights. In 7 : 143 the Quran further tells us that at first the appointed duration was thirty nights, but by a subsequent addition of ten the period was extended to forty nights which is a fuller number. This favour was granted to Moses because of his faithfulness and sincerity.

The words, *and you were transgressors*, mean, you resorted to setting up equals with God, because this practice is indeed the greatest ظلم i.e. putting a thing in a wrong place. Elsewhere the Quran says : شرك i.e. attributing partners to God is indeed a great ظلم (31 : 14).

59. Commentary :

We learn from Exod. 32:9, 10 that the worship of the calf called forth the wrath of God, whereupon Moses prayed to God for the Israelites and then, in the words of the Old Testament, 'the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people' (Exod. 32 : 14). In this connection it may be noted that the Quran uses the word 'forgave' instead of 'repented,' as used in the Bible, for the latter expression is obviously quite inappropriate to God's attribute of Knowledge and Majesty. Most probably the word is either a mis-translation of the original or a later interpolation.

It may also be noted here that the word عَفَرَ used in this verse does not only signify "forgiving or passing over a sin" but also "obliterating a sin." If a man truly and sincerely turns to God with repentance, He not only forgives him his sin but obliterates the very traces of it, leaving him as stainless and pure as a new-born child.

The words, *that you may be grateful*, point to a very deep truth. Forgiveness by a superior authority produces the feelings of gratefulness in the person forgiven, and gratefulness in turn impels a man to further acts of obedience and goodness. Thus a sort of continuity in righteousness is brought about.

60. Important Words :

مُوسَى (Moses), the Founder of Judaism, was the deliverer of the Israelites from the hands of

Pharaoh. He was an Israelite Prophet who, according to Biblical data, lived about 500 years after Abraham and about 1,400 years before Jesus. Moses was a Law-giving Prophet, the other Israelite Prophets that came after him being only followers of his system. As a Law-giving Prophet and the founder of a great religious system, Moses bears striking resemblance to the Holy Prophet of Islam to whom he has been likened in the Quran itself (73 : 16).

As for the name Moses, it may be briefly noted that موسى (Moses) is really a Hebrew word in which language it is written and pronounced as *موشے* (*moshe*) and means, "a thing drawn out of water" or simply "a thing drawn out" (*Enc. Bib.*). The Bible itself supports that significance where Pharaoh's daughter, speaking of the name Moses, says, "because I drew him out of the water" (Exod. 2 : 10). This derivation also finds support in Arabic, from which language Hebrew is derived. The Arabs say *اروثى الشئى* i.e. he extricated or drew out the thing (Aqrab). Thus the word *موشى* which is the passive participle from *اروثى* would mean "a thing extricated" or "a thing drawn out." Another possible derivation is from *اروسى* (derived from *روسى*). They say *اروسى الشئى* i.e. he cut the thing asunder (Aqrab). As Moses was cut off from his family, he was given that name.

Recently, however, the view has been expressed by certain Western scholars, e.g., by Breasted in his *Dawn of Conscience* and by Freud in his *Moses and Monotheism* that Moses is not a Hebrew name but an Egyptian. It is also claimed that Moses was not an Israelite by birth and did not belong to Hebrew stock. There can be no objection if we accept the first-mentioned view regarding the etymology of the name Moses, because as Moses was in his childhood cut off from his own people and was reared in Pharaoh's house, it was not unnatural for Pharaoh's daughter, herself an Egyptian,

to give him a name of her own liking. But, as pointed out above, the fact is that Moses is a Hebrew name and Pharaoh's daughter, if indeed it were she who gave him that name, must have certainly been influenced to give the child a Hebrew name, thinking that he belonged to the Israelite people. It is probable, however, that the name was suggested by the sister of Moses herself who was personally known to the household of Pharaoh, being present at the time when Pharaoh's daughter picked up the lad from the river (Exod. 2 : 7 ; Quran, 28 : 9—13).

But there is absolutely no ground for accepting the view that Moses was not an Israelite or that the children of Israel never settled in Egypt. The idea is repugnant to all established facts and runs counter to the accepted history of the Jewish people and to the Bible and the Quran, both giving the lie to it. Among the arguments Western critics have advanced in support of their view, two appear to be the more noteworthy. One is that موسى (Moses) is an Egyptian name occurring in many combinations of that language e.g., *Amenmesse*, *Ahmosi*, *Thotmes*, *Rámose*, etc., the last-mentioned being the same as Rameses, the name of the Pharaoh in whose time Moses lived. Though a deeper study of these words would indicate that these Egyptian names are really different from the Hebrew or Arabic word discussed above, yet even if we admit the name Moses to be of Egyptian origin, there is no justification for assuming that the man Moses was not Israelite but Egyptian by birth. As Israelites were a subject people in Egypt, living under the rule of the Pharaohs, it is no wonder if they adopted some of the Egyptian names of the ruling class, just as in India many Indians are fond of, and actually adopt, English names. But, as shown above, the fact remains that موسى is a Hebrew name, having definite derivation in both Hebrew and Arabic.

The second argument advanced by these critics is that the idea of God's Oneness is originally Egyptian, having been first conceived and adopted by an ancient Egyptian king named Amenhotep IV who came to the throne in 1375 B.C. and passed away about 1358 B.C. when probably not 30 years of age. Later he gave himself the title of Ikhnaton (or Akhenaton) which means "the servant of the one God." This, these critics allege, shows that Moses was an Egyptian who borrowed the idea of God's Oneness from Ikhnaton and then preached it among the Israelites. The inference is simply absurd. In the first place, it is against all reason to suppose that a certain conception is the monopoly of one people only. More than one people may independently form similar ideas without having borrowed them from one another. Secondly, even supposing that the idea of God's unity is of Egyptian origin, there is no justification for the inference that Moses was not an Israelite. If an Indian can borrow an idea from an Englishman, why cannot an Israelite borrow an idea from an Egyptian? The truth is that the idea of God's Oneness is neither the produce of Egypt nor of Palestine nor of any other place. It has its origin in divine revelation which has been independently vouchsafed to different peoples in different lands and at different times. It is never claimed that Moses was the first to conceive or preach that idea. He got it through divine revelation just as Jacob and Isaac and Abraham and Noah and Adam got it before him.

In short, there is no justification for supposing that the name Moses is of Egyptian origin or that the man Moses was not an Israelite. The linguistic evidence of Hebrew and Arabic, combined with reason and the evidence of Jewish history and tradition, not to speak of the story of the Bible and the Quran, all go to support the already established fact that Moses was an Israelite and not an

Egyptian by birth, and that his name is also of Hebrew origin. (For a full discussion of the point see *Tafsir Kabir* by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community, under 2:54).

الكتاب (the Book) is derived from كتب which means: (1) he wrote; (2) he made a thing obligatory, or he prescribed a law. The word كتاب bears the following meanings: (1) a thing in which or on which one writes; (2) a book; (3) a revealed book; (4) an epistle or letter; (5) an injunction or a commandment prescribed for a person or a people (Aqrah).

الفرقان (the Discrimination) is an Arabic word derived from فرق i.e. he divided or differentiated. It is wrong to think that it is not an Arabic but a Syriac word. The Arabic language abounds in words derived from the same root, which are also commonly met with in pre-Islamic literature of Arabia. The root meaning of the word فرقان is 'to differentiate.' Hence فرقان is applied to that which differentiates between the true and the false, between sound reasoning and fallacy. *Furqān* also means 'an argument', because an argument serves to discriminate between the true and the false. 'Morning' or 'Dawn' are also termed *furqān* because they separate night from day. فرقان also means 'aid' or 'support', because the man helped and supported becomes distinguished from those against whom he receives assistance (Tāj). From the above it is clear that all revealed Books are فرقان as well as all "Signs" granted by God.

Commentary :

Here the word الكتاب (translated in the text as the Book) is used for the "tablets" on which the Ten Commandments given to Moses were written. The Quran itself makes it clear in 7:146, 151, 155 that it was only the tablets and not the Pentateuch that were given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and, as explained

55. And remember the time when Moses said to his people: 'O my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by taking the calf for worship; turn ye therefore to your Maker, and slay your own people; that is best for you with your Maker'. Then He turned towards you with compassion. Surely, He is Oft-Returning with compassion and is Merciful.⁶¹

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يُقَوْمِ إِنَّمَا ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
بَاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِيكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ
ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِيكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٥﴾

under Important Words, the word الكتاب does not necessarily mean a book, but any thing on which something is written. Thus the word *kitāb* here refers, not to the Pentateuch, but to the Ten Commandments that were written on the tablets. The verse would therefore mean that God gave Moses not only the Book or the Commandments written on the tablets but also such clear Signs and arguments, and brought about such events as led to clear discrimination between truth and falsehood. According to the Quran, *فرقان* is not the name of any particular thing; but every Sign and every instance of divine assistance discriminating truth from falsehood and every argument which serves the same object is termed *فرقان*.

The Quran uses the word *فرقان* about itself (25:2) and also calls the Battle of Badr, which so eminently helped to break the power of the Quraish, *يوم الفرقان* i.e. the Day of Discrimination (8:42).

Dr. Wherry's criticism that the Quran is wrong in stating in this verse that the Torah was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai betrays his ignorance of the Arabic language. He was apparently unaware that in Arabic the word *كتاب* is used in a much wider sense than "book." His inadequate knowledge of the Arabic language has also led Wherry to observe that the Prophet of Islam must have borrowed the word *فرقان* from the Syrians.

61. Important Words :

بارى (Maker) is derived from *برى* which means, he shaped or fashioned a reed into a pen, or he shaped an arrow. *بارى* means, one who forms or fashions a thing by cutting; one who shapes out or pares a thing. *بارى* is to be distinguished from *خالق* for whereas the latter word means, one who brings a thing into existence according to the proper plan or measure, or one who brings a thing into existence from a state of non-existence, the former word, i.e., *بارى* signifies one who fashions a thing into its proper shape. Generally, however, *بارى* is used as somewhat synonymous with *خالق*, for it is the formation of a shape which is the result in each case (Mufradāt & Lane).

Commentary :

It appears from this verse that, although after the incident of calf-worship a general pardon was granted to the Israelites, yet it was thought essential to punish the ringleaders who were ordered to be slain. The clause *فاقتلوا انفسكم* does not mean "slay yourselves," but "slay your men or slay your kith and kin." The latter meaning is borne out by 2:85, where God says, *you shall not turn your people out of your homes*. Similarly, in 24:62, we read: *When you enter houses, greet your people with salam*. In these verses the expression *انفسكم* has been used in the sense of 'your people or your brethren.' See also 2:86; 4:67.

56. And remember when you said :
' O Moses, we will by no means believe
thee "until we see Allah face to face ;
then the thunderbolt overtook you,
while you gazed."⁶²

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً
فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّيْقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

^{a4} : 154.

Speaking of this incident, the Bible says :
"Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh,
and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout
the camp, and slay every man his brother,
and every man his companion, and every man
his neighbour. And the sons of Levi did
according to the word of Moses : and there fell
of the people that day about three thousand
men" (Exod. 32 : 27, 28).

In the above passage, the number of persons
slain has been put at three thousand, but this
is apparently an error. Similarly, the number
of the Israelites who came out of Egypt is re-
presented in the Bible as six hundred thousand
(Exod. 12 : 37) which also is clearly wrong.
Such a large number could not live as servants
and labourers of the Egyptians, who them-
selves speak of them as "a small community"
(the Quran, 26:55). The error has apparently
arisen from a confusion of the words *الف*
(*ilf*) and *الف* (*alf*), the former meaning "a
family," and the latter "a thousand" (Aqrab).
Really, there were only 600 families of the
Israelites who lived in Egypt and who left
the country under the leadership of Moses, but
they were misconstrued into 600 thousands.
Similarly, the number of persons slain could
scarcely be three thousand. There were
most likely only three families the leaders of
which took part in setting up the calf for
worship, and these were put to death by
their own kinsmen at the bidding of
Moses.

The words *فاقتلوا انفسكم* (slay yourselves) have
also been construed as "kill your desires"—an
interpretation borne out by the usage of the

Arabic language. Some Commentators prefer
this interpretation to the one given above on
the ground that the Israelites, having been
forgiven by God at the intercession of Moses,
could not have been ordered to slay their
brethren, for such an order would have been
incompatible with the forgiveness granted
them. This argument, however, does not
appear to be sound ; for forgiveness of a
people as a whole is not incompatible with the
punishment of a few ringleaders.

The clause, *turn ye therefore to your
Maker*, implies an exhortation to the
Israelites to turn to their *بارى* or *Maker*
or *Fashioner*, which means that they should
work a change or reformation in them-
selves.

62. Important Words :

الصاعقة (the thunderbolt). See 2 : 20.

Commentary :

The present-day Bible, at fault in many places,
does not make a direct mention of the incident
referred to in the verse under comment. But a
careful study of it reveals the fact that the re-
ference is to the time when Moses went up the
Mount to receive God's commandments and left
his men camped at the foot of the mountain.
On the day appointed, Moses brought forth
the people out of the camp to meet God, and
they stood at the nether part of the Mount.
And the Lord came down on Mount Sinai on
the top of the Mount and ordered Moses saying :
"Go down, charge the people, lest they break
through unto the Lord to gaze and many of
them perish" (Exod. 19 : 21). The words

57. Then "We raised you up after your death, that you might be grateful."⁶³

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

^a2 : 260 ; 6 : 123.

"to gaze" occurring in the above quotation clearly show that the Israelites were eager to see God and, as the Quran puts it, they had previously expressed a desire to that effect. But when the manifestation actually came and they saw the thunders and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, they removed themselves and stood afar off and exclaimed to Moses, saying: "Speak thou with us and we will hear: but let not God speak with us lest we die" (Exod. 20:19). This shows that, at first, they wanted to see God, i.e., see a most clear manifestation of Him without which they would not believe, but having been greatly terrified, they afterwards went to the other extreme and shouted to Moses that they would have none of the manifestations and would not even listen to God's words lest they die.

As the word قال does not necessarily mean "he said" but is used on occasions when one does not say a thing in so many words but simply expresses a wish or idea by one's condition (see under 2:31), it is possible that the Israelites did not make this demand verbally but that their condition was expressive of it. In this case the words اذ قالتم would not mean "when you said" but "when your attitude showed that."

As the word صاعقه also means 'death,' the verse may be taken to mean that this unreasonable demand of the Israelites so arrogantly expressed brought about their spiritual death. This significance finds corroboration in the next verse wherein God says: *Then We raised you up after your death.*

It may be noted here that whereas the Bible mentions the incident of calf-worship after the incident referred to above, the Quran reverses the order, mentioning the incident of calf-worship before that of the demand of the Israelites to see God; and a careful study of the relevant facts indicates that the Quranic order is the correct one. The incident of the calf must certainly have taken place before the Israelites went to Mount Sinai and before the Lord came down upon the Mount in the sight of the people; for if the Israelites had already gone to the Mount and had seen a clear manifestation of God, then it is hardly possible that they should have taken the calf for their God after such manifestation. Evidently they had made the calf before going to Mount Sinai, and when Moses ordered them to refrain from calf-worship, they obeyed but expressed an arrogant desire to see God so that they might be sure of His existence. Thereupon Moses took them to the Mount and God descended on the Mount in the sight of the people (Exod. 19:9—11). The words of the Quran: *Then the thunderbolt overtook you*, may refer to the thunders and lightnings which accompanied the manifestation of God and which caused the Israelites to tremble with fear.

63. Important Words:

بَعَثْنَاكُمْ (We raised you) is from بعث . They say *i.e.* (1) he sent him as a messenger; (2) he made him to rise; (3) he roused him up; (4) He (God) brought him to life; (5) he awoke him from sleep; (6) he instigated him to do a certain thing (Agrab).

58. And "We caused the clouds to be a shade over you and ^bsent down on you Manna and Salwā, *saying*, 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you.' And they wronged Us not, but it was themselves that they wronged.^{a4}

وَوَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ
وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا
لَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

^{a7} : 161. ^{b7} : 161 ; 20 : 81.

موتكم (your death). See notes on 2 : 20 and 2 : 29 where it has been explained that the word موت (death) includes (1) spiritual death; and (2) a state of extreme sorrow, grief, or fear, etc.

Commentary :

The verse should not be understood to mean that the Israelites were restored to life after they had actually died. The Quran strongly repudiates the idea of the dead coming to life again in this world (21 : 96). The death spoken of in the verse is either spiritual death or a state of extreme grief or terror brought about through dreadful punishment, etc. The Bible testifies to the "death" of which the Quran speaks, as follows: "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee. . . . And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf" (Exod. 32 : 31—35).

But God's forgiveness soon followed; for He did not want to ruin the Israelites but to raise them morally and spiritually and make them a grateful people.

64. Important Words :

من (Manna). The infinitive من signifies bestowing favour on or doing good to. They

say من عليه *i.e.* he bestowed a favour on him without his labouring for it. من means : (1) a favour; (2) anything obtained without trouble or difficulty; (3) honey-dew (Aqrab).

سَلْوَى (Salwā) is derived from سَلَا. They say سَلَا عَنْ الشَّيْءِ *i.e.* he was satisfied with it. سَلَاهُ عَنْ الشَّيْءِ means, he satisfied him with it; he removed his grief and worry through it. سَلْوَى is (1) a whitish bird resembling a quail and found in some parts of Arabia and the neighbouring countries. It also means, (2) whatever renders a person contented and happy; (3) honey (Aqrab).

Commentary :

As the Israelites were camping in hot and open country, God speaks of the clouds having been sent to give them shade. We learn from Exod. 40 : 34—38, that clouds spread and shaded the spot where the Israelites encamped, and that they dispersed on the day when it was time for them to resume their journey. But the verse under comment shows that the clouds meant not only shadow but also rainfall because, *firstly*, it is rain-clouds that are generally dark and dense; and, *secondly*, along with the "clouds," the Quran also mentions two eatables, *Manna* and *Salwā*, which served as complement to the favour mentioned in the shadowing clouds. In fact, there was scarcity of both water and food in that arid country, and God used to quench their thirst by sending clouds, and satisfy their hunger by providing *Manna* and *Salwā*. And no wonder, for God shows special favours

59. And remember the time when We said, "Enter this village and eat therefrom—wherever you will—plentifully; and enter the gate submissively and say, 'God! forgive us our sins.' We shall forgive you your sins and We shall give increase to those who do good."⁶⁵

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْحَسَنِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

^{a7} : 162.

to His servants in order to remove their difficulties and promote their comfort.

The sending down of *Manna* and *Salwā* has been mentioned in Exod. 16:11–15, where we read: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."

When the children of Israel got no food in the wilderness and death stared them in the face, they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron. They said to them: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exod. 16:3). These murmurings of the Israelites were answered in the passage quoted above.

The Holy Prophet refers to the *Manna* bestowed on the Israelites in the following ḥadith. Says he: "The mushroom is one of the things included in the *Manna*, and the sap of it heals the eye" (Bukhārī). He is also reported to have said: "The mushroom is among the things which God bestowed upon Moses, as a free gift" (Muḥīt). This shows that God provided the Israelites with a number of things in the wilderness, sometimes with one thing and sometimes with another.

The verse does not mention how the Israelites "wronged themselves." But as God speaks here of the favours bestowed upon them, it is evident that they wronged themselves by showing ingratitude and by murmuring and complaining of their lot in spite of God's special favours. By doing so, however, they did no harm to God or His Messenger, but only harmed their own souls.

65. Important Words :

سجدا (submissively) is derived from سجد which means: (1) he showed submissiveness and humility. The Quran says والارض والسموات لله يسجدن في السماوات والارض (13:16); (2) he fell prostrate (Mufradāt). In the verse under comment the word is used in the first mentioned sense; for, besides other reasons pointing to this significance, one cannot pass through a gate while fallen prostrate on the ground.

حط (forgive us our sins) is derived from حط which means: (1) he descended or came down ;

60. "The transgressors changed it for a word other than that which was said to them. So We sent down upon the transgressors a punishment from heaven, because they were disobedient."⁶⁶

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ
فَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

47 : 163.

(2) he brought down, or caused to fall, or removed a burden, etc. استحط فلانا وزره means, he requested that person to take down or relieve him of his heavy burden (Aqrah). As in theology, to seek relief from a burden is to seek forgiveness of sins, the expression حطة (literally the bringing down of a burden) would mean, remove our burden of sins or forgive us our sins.

نغفر (We shall forgive) is derived from غفر. They say غفرا الشيء meaning, he covered or concealed the thing. غفرا المتاع في الوعاء means, he put the things in the bag and thus covered and protected them. غفرا الله له ذنبه means, God covered up his sin and forgave it. غفرا الامر بغفرته means, he rectified or reformed the matter suitably (Aqrah & Lane). مغفرة and غفران both infinitives, signify God's forgiveness or His protection of a person against the punishment of his sins (Mufradât).

Commentary :

The Bible is here again at fault and makes no direct mention of this incident. It, however, speaks of a battle which in those days took place between the Amalekites and the Israelites in Rephidim (Exod. 17 : 8) which shows that the Amalekites inhabited certain parts of this land. Though the land was a desert, yet here and there habitations were also to be found (Enc. Bib. iv. 4036, 37). In fact, the presence of a desert does not preclude the existence of habitations, because even wandering tribes make here and there small habitations which

serve as meeting-places for their scattered clans.

As the Israelites were eager to live in inhabited places owing to the facilities they afforded and owing also to their previous mode of living, they were bidden to go to some neighbouring village where they would combine the life of the desert with that of a habitation and would be free to eat wherever they liked, as is usual in a desert place where there is no private ownership.

But as this change was to bring them in contact with other people and was likely to affect their morals, they were at the same time bidden to be careful about themselves and to be submissive and obedient to God and also to pray to Him that He might forgive them the sins they might commit. If they acted upon this injunction, God would be kind to them and would forgive them their sins. Nay, He would further bestow on those who acted righteously His added favours and blessings.

The words "this village" need not refer to any specified village. According to the Arabic idiom the words may mean "any village that may be near" or "the nearest village."

66. Important Words :

رجزا (a punishment) means : (1) filth; (2) punishment; (3) idol-worship; (4) iniquity or sin (Aqrah).

من السماء (from heaven). For سماء see note on 2 : 20. As سماء means a "height" or "anything that is high above us", therefore the

- R. 7. 61. And remember the time "when Moses prayed for water for his people, and We said, 'Strike the rock with thy rod'; and there gushed forth from it twelve springs, so that every tribe knew their drinking place. 'Eat and drink of what Allah has provided, and commit not iniquity in the earth, creating disorder.'⁶⁷

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ
الْحَجَرَ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ
عَلِمَ كُلُّ أَنَاثٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ
اللَّهِ وَلَا تَغْوُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

a7 : 161.

expression من السماء would mean "from on high" or "from God", implying that the punishment meted out to the Israelites was not brought about through earthly means but, as it were, descended from above.

Commentary :

This verse is a continuation of the previous one. God commanded the Israelites to behave submissively and to pray to Him for the forgiveness of their sins, but they, mischievous and arrogant as ever, disobeyed the injunctions given to them and changed the words of prayer taught by God, whereupon He chastised them with a punishment that was not of this earth, i.e., He visited them with a pestilence or plague that destroyed a number of them. Or the expression رجزا من السماء may mean that their disobedience recoiled on their own souls in the sense of moral degradation and filthiness of heart and mind.

The question of the word which the Israelites used in place of the one taught to them is immaterial. According to some, they used the word حبة or حطة i.e. "give us corn to eat" instead of حطة i.e. "remove our sins" (Bukhārī & Jarīr). The words sound alike and afforded a playful opportunity to the mischief-minded among the Israelites. But as already said, the word substituted is not material. What matters is that they, i.e., many of them as the Quran hints, disobeyed the Lord and made religion a plaything. Hence the punishment.

67. Important Words :

عصا (rod). عصا الرجل means, he beat the man with a rod. عصا القوم means, he brought together the people, or he made them agree on some matter of common concern. عصا means: (1) a rod strong enough to support the weight of a man; (2) communal and family life; (3) a community; (4) the shin-bone (Aqrah).

الحجر (rock) is from حجر i.e. it prevented or resisted. الحجر means, a stone; a great mass of stone; a rock (Lane).

Commentary :

This verse mentions another favour bestowed on the Israelites. When once they were hard pressed by thirst and no water was procurable in the desert, God saved them by revealing to Moses the knowledge of a rock from which water flowed out when struck with a rod.

The demand of the Israelites for water and their being supplied with it is mentioned at two places in the Bible. At one place mention is made of the twelve springs of Elim, but nothing is said there of Moses' striking the rock with his rod (Exod. 15 : 27). At the other place, Moses, by divine command, struck the rock Horeb with his rod, and there flowed out abundant water with which the Israelites and their animals slaked their thirst (Exod. 17 : 1—7 ; Numb. 20 : 2—11). Here no mention is made of the number of springs. It appears that the Quran refers to the occurrence

relating to the rock of Horeb because, with the only difference that the Bible does not give the number of springs whereas the Quran gives a definite number, almost all the details narrated in the Bible concur with the narrative of the Quran. As for the slight difference with regard to the number of springs, reason favours the narrative of the Quran. The Israelites numbered several thousands besides riding animals and beasts of burden, and one spring was certainly insufficient for such a large number, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the thirsty Israelites were, according to the Bible, in a state of extreme exasperation at that time and were prepared even to stone Moses to death. It is possible, however, that at the source there was only one mouth of the spring, but it divided into twelve channels as it flowed down the rock, the number being in conformity with the number of the Israelite tribes.

If at present there is no trace of the twelve springs at that spot, it is no wonder ; for it is a matter of common experience that sometimes several springs rising at the same spot have some of their openings closed and cease to flow. From a testimony quoted by Sale, however, it appears that even as late as the end of the fifteenth century, twelve springs

actually flowed there. He says : " The rock stands within the border of Arabia and some of his (the Prophet's) countrymen must needs have seen it if he himself had not, as it is most probable he had. And in effect he seems to be in the right. For one who went into those parts in the end of the fifteenth century tells us expressly that the water issued from twelve places of the rock, according to the number of the tribes of Israel " (Al-Koran by Sale, page 8).

The miracle of Moses on this occasion did not lie in bringing about a thing against the known laws of nature, but in the fact that God revealed to him the specific spot where water was just ready to flow at a blow of his rod. It is within the experience of those who study geological conditions in rocky districts that sometimes water flows underneath small hillocks or rocks and gushes forth when the rock is struck with something heavy or pointed.

As *Manna* and *Salwā* had already been bestowed on the Israelites, God now fittingly asks them to *eat and drink of what Allah has provided*. But as a life of ease and independence is likely to make men arrogant and mischievous, God at the same time warns the Israelites to exercise self-restraint and refrain from creating trouble and disorder in the land.

62. And *remember the time* when you said, 'O Moses, surely, we will not remain content with one *kind* of food; pray, then, to thy Lord for us that He bring forth for us of what the earth grows—of its herbs and its cucumbers and its wheat and its lentils and its onions'. He said, 'Would you take in exchange that which is inferior for that which is superior? Go to some town, and there is for you what you ask'. And "they were smitten with abasement and destitution, and ^bthey incurred the wrath of Allah: that was because they rejected the Signs of Allah and 'would kill the Prophets unjustly; this was because they rebelled and transgressed.⁶⁸

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْدِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْتِجُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصِلِهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيُّطٌ مُصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءَ وَغَضِبَ مِنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ٦٨

^a3 : 113. ^b2 : 91; 3 : 113; 5 : 61. ^c2 : 88; 3 : 22, 113, 184; 5 : 71.

68. Important Words :

فومها (its wheat). فوم means : (1) wheat; (2) any corn suitable for making bread; (3) garlic; (4) chick-pea (Aqrah).

مصر (a town) means : (1) a town or a city; (2) the frontier between two countries; (3) the thing that intervenes between two things (Aqrah).

يقتلون (would kill) is derived from قتل *i.e.* he killed. The infinitive means : (1) killing with a sword or with a stone or with poison or by any other means; (2) attempting to kill; (3) making up the mind to kill; (4) boycotting or cutting off all connections; (5) killing one's carnal desires; (6) weakening the strength of a thing, as alcohol is "killed" with the addition of water, or hunger is "killed" with food, etc.; (7) humbling a person completely; (8) rendering a person like unto one killed either physically or morally or spiritually; (9) acquiring complete and certain knowledge about a thing; and (10) cursing a person or thing (Aqrah, Mufradāt & Lisān).

Commentary :

In this verse another instance is cited to show how the Israelites made no effort to turn the favours of God to good account. When they were in the desert, God sent them *Manna* and *Salwā*. But soon after this they began to exhibit discontent with one kind of food and to clamour for a variety of grain, onions, salad and green-stuff (Num. 11:5—11). It may be noted that both *Manna* and *Salwā* taken together were considered one kind of food as they were taken continuously for a long time. It is further learnt from the Bible that the supply of *Salwā* was discontinued after a while and the Israelites were thus left to live on *Manna* alone (Num. 11:6). As the demand was not based on a right understanding of the wisdom of God Who wanted the Israelites to breathe the free air of the desert for a time, they met with disgrace and drew upon themselves the wrath of God.

God's displeasure with the Israelites was not due to their demand for other food. The real

cause lay elsewhere. Having lived for a long time in bondage and a state of dependence, they had become cowardly and indolent. So God wished them to stay in the desert for some time, living on game and wild herbs, that they might get rid of their cowardice and indolence by living an independent life in the desert. Thus revitalized, they were to be led to the Promised Land and made rulers of Palestine. The Israelites, however, failed to understand the real purpose of God or having understood it, failed to appreciate it, and foolishly insisted upon living in a town. God pointed out their error, saying that they had asked for a life of agriculture in preference to what was to lead them to sovereignty. He wanted to prepare them for rule over the Promised Land, but they hungered for husbandry. So He indignantly ordered them to go down to a town where they would get the desired things.

The Israelites deserved punishment, because their impatience was the outcome of a want of faith in the promise of God. This lack of faith in God was due to their opposition to His Prophets and disbelief in His Signs, and they opposed the Prophets because they were transgressors and evil-doers. The Prophets invited them to guidance and virtue which they disliked, and, as a result, they opposed them. Thus the Quran admirably traces the causal sequence of every evil to its origin and strikes at its very root so as to prevent all possibility of recurrence.

The words, *we will not remain content with one kind of food*, contain a threat and are full of arrogance. If the Israelites had meant simply to express a wish, the words would have been "we are unable to remain content with one kind of food," and not as they stand in the Quran. The Bible gives a vivid picture of their insolent and almost rebellious attitude on this occasion (Num. 11:5-15).

The words *يقتلون النبيين* translated in the verse as "would kill the Prophets" do not mean that the Israelites actually killed the Prophets, because, up to the time of Moses, no Prophet is known to have been slain by them. As a matter of fact, Moses is the first Prophet who was sent to the Israelites as a nation. Thus Moses and his brother, Aaron, are the only persons to whom the words can be applied; but obviously these two Prophets were not killed by the Israelites, although the latter often opposed them and were sometimes even bent upon killing them (Exod. 17:4). Hence, the word *قتل* in the verse cannot possibly mean actual killing. Its only meaning here is that they severely opposed the Prophets and were even prepared to kill them. This interpretation finds corroboration not only in Arabic lexicons, for which see Important Words, but the Quran itself supports it in a number of verses where the word *قتل* has been used undoubtedly, not in the sense of actual killing but in that of attempting to kill or intending to kill (3:22 and 40:29). Bukhārī also relates a tradition to the effect that once certain hot-headed Quraish youths brutally assaulted the Holy Prophet in the precincts of the Ka'ba, whereupon Abū Bakr rushed to his rescue, saying, *اقتلون رجلاً ان يقول ربى الله* "Do you kill a man because he says Allah is his Lord and Master?" (chapter on *Tafsīr*). In this ḥadīth the word *قتل* is clearly used in the sense of attempting to kill or intending to kill and not actual killing.

It will not be out of place to point out here that the purport of verse 2:59 discussed above is altogether different from the one under comment. Though in both of them God apparently orders the Israelites to go to some habitation, yet the meaning is entirely different, rather quite the opposite, in each case. As a matter of fact, whereas in verse 2:59 God Himself willingly commands the Israelites to go to some habitation, His ordering them to

- R. 8. 63. "Surely, the Believers, and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians—whichever party *from among these* truly ^bbelieves in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds—shall have their reward with their Lord, and ^cno fear *shall* come upon them, nor shall they grieve."⁶⁹

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّبِيَّانَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

^a5 : 70 ; 22 : 18. ^b4 : 137 ; 6 : 93. ^c2 : 113, 278 ; 6 : 49 ; 10 : 63.

"go down into a town" in the verse under comment is expressive of definite displeasure and anger. In the previous verse the *قرية* or habitation meant only a habitation found in the desert by going into which the Israelites did not leave the free desert life but rather combined it with the facilities of a habitation. On the contrary, by "going down into" a *مصر* *i.e.* a town or city as mentioned in the verse under comment they altogether abandoned the desert life and adopted a life of ease, as is led in towns and cities. Hence the difference. This is why the Quran uses the simple word *ادخلوا* *i.e.* "enter" in 2 : 59 and the word *اهبطوا* *i.e.* "go down," a term expressive of decline, in the verse under comment. Similarly, whereas in verse 2 : 59 the Quran follows up the commandment with the words *eat therefrom plentifully wherever you like*, in the present verse the commandment is followed by the words *and they were smitten with abasement and destitution*. The difference is apparent. The former expression is indicative of the freedom of life in the desert. and the latter of the suffocating atmosphere and mental slavery of towns and cities.

69. Important Words :

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (The Believers). The expression signifies the people who profess to be believers in Islam *i.e.* the Muslims. Thus *إيمان* here means only profession of Islam. The word

has been used in the sense of Muslim elsewhere also in the Quran (4 : 137.)

الَّذِينَ هَادُوا (the Jews) means, those who profess the Jewish religion. The word *هادوا* is derived from *هاد* which literally means, he turned towards the truth or towards God with repentance (Aqrab). The word also signifies returning towards a thing slowly or walking tardily (Mufradāt).

النَّصَارَى (the Christians) is derived from *نصر* *i.e.* he helped. As the disciples of Jesus sided with him as God's helpers (3 : 53), so they came to be known as *نصارى* *i.e.* helpers. Or the word is connected with *ناصره* (Nazareth), a village which was the scene of Jesus' childhood. In either case *نصارى* has come to signify the followers of Jesus, *i.e.*, those who profess the Christian religion (Mufradāt).

الصَّبِيَّانَ (the Sabians) is derived from *صبا*. They say *صبا الرجل* *i.e.* he forsook one religion and adopted another. *صبا النجم* means, the star made its appearance (Aqrab). Literally, therefore, *صابي* is one who forsakes his old religion and adopts a new one. Technically, however, the word *الصبايين* refers to certain religious sects that were found in parts of Arabia and countries bordering on it. The name was applied to the following faiths: (1) The star-worshipping people living in Mesopotamia (Gibbon's *Roman Empire*, v. 440 and *Murūj al-Dhahab* by Mas'ūdī and *Enc. Rel. Eth.*, viii,

under *Mandwans*); (2) The faith which was a sort of patch-work of Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism (Kathir, under 2:63); (3) A people who lived near Mosul in Iraq and believed in one God but had no known Law or Book. They claimed to follow the religion of Noah (Jarir & Kathir, under 2:63); (4) A people who lived round about Iraq and professed belief in all the Prophets of God and had a special system of prayer and fasting (Kathir). Some Muslim Jurists looked upon الصابئين as a People of the Book, allowing them the same privileges as are allowed to the latter. None of the above-mentioned peoples should, however, be confused with the Sabians (not Sabians) mentioned by certain commentators of the Bible as people inhabiting ancient Yemen. In this connection see also *R. Rel.* xl. 129—132.

من آمن بالله (whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah). Here ايمان means true belief, i.e., the belief which counts true in the sight of God and not merely profession of a certain faith. The Quran uses the word ايمان in this sense in 49:15.

Commentary :

This verse wedged in among the verses recounting the iniquities of the Israelites seems rather misplaced. But deeper study shows that it has been most fittingly placed here. In fact, the Quran is not a book of stories but has come with the declared object of uplifting those who have fallen morally and spiritually. It follows a psychological order in perfect conformity with the mental attitude of the reader, interspersing every narrative with fitting hints for his moral and spiritual regeneration. So is the case in this verse. After enumerating certain wrongdoings of the Israelites, the Quran goes on to say that although their sins are great, yet God's mercy is infinitely greater, and if even now the Israelites, or for that matter, Christians, Sabians or any other people, should turn to

God and truly and sincerely believe in Him and the Last Day (these being the two fundamental articles of faith which in principle comprise all others) and follow up their belief with good and righteous deeds, they can become heirs to His grace and mercy.

The verse is important and much difference has arisen about its real meaning. Some who are not in the habit of making a deep study of the Quran have hastily jumped to the conclusion that, according to this verse, belief in Islam is not necessary. They say that anybody, whether he is a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian or any other, who sincerely believes in God and the Last Day and does good deeds will be saved. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Quran emphatically declares in a number of verses that belief in the Holy Prophet and in his revelation is essential. Says God: *Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers and desire to make distinction between Allah and His Messengers and say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in others,' and desire to take a way in between, these indeed are veritable disbelievers; and We have prepared for the disbelievers an humiliating punishment* (4:151, 152). Again, *And those who believe in the Hereafter believe therein* (i.e. the Quran) *and they strictly observe their Prayers* (6:93). From these two verses it becomes clear beyond any shadow of doubt that according to the Quran (1) belief in the Prophets is part and parcel of belief in God, and (2) belief in the Hereafter includes belief in God's revelation as well. Elsewhere the Quran says, *Surely the true religion with Allah is Islam* (complete submission) *and whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the life to come he shall be among the losers* (3:20, 86). This verse along with the two quoted above definitely proves that the objection mentioned above is entirely baseless and is born of utter ignorance of the real Quranic

teachings. In fact, as explained in the above verses, the Quran confines itself to a mention of belief in God and the Last Day, not because belief in the Holy Prophet and the Quran is not essential, but because the former two beliefs include the latter two, the four being essentially inseparable.

What is, then, the real meaning of the verse under comment? A careful study of the verse and its context leaves no doubt that it can have only two possible meanings:—

(1) One meaning is that, having recounted a number of wrongs committed by the Israelites, God invites them to an easy and decisive method of establishing which party has His support and which not, and in order to make the argument still more forceful, He includes in the proposed context Jews, Christians and Sabians, the only followers of revealed religions found in and around Arabia. It is evident that in religious matters, when everything else has been said and every other means has been tried, the final criterion for testing the truth of contesting parties is reduced to this, which party enjoys divine succour and which not? If God is a living God and has Himself raised a Prophet for the regeneration of the world, it stands to reason that He would not leave His Messenger alone but would come to his help and show powerful Signs in his support. This phenomenon has repeated itself in the time of each and every Prophet of God. So why not make use of it here in order to distinguish the truth from falsehood? It is to this phase of the matter that the verse under comment invites Jews, Christians, etc. God says, there are now as many as four claimants in the field, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians. So let all wait and see whom God's helping hand succours in the present struggle. In the time of Moses God helped the Israelites against the Egyptians; in the time of Jesus He helped Christians against their opponents, and in the time of other Prophets He helped

their followers against their enemies, and this served as a practical proof of the fact that the truth lay with the Prophets and not with their opponents. The same tried criterion was now available, viz., *whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah and the Last Day shall have their reward with their Lord and no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve.* The challenge was thrown out to all existing claimants of divine support and the final and unparalleled triumph of Islam against all adversaries gave the clearest of verdicts in favour of the former.

The verse under comment thus contains a mighty prophecy the fulfilment of which in the teeth of all opposition was a wonderful proof of the truth of Islam. And the fulfilment of this prophecy proves to be the more wonderful when one bears in mind the fact that this verse was revealed at a time (it was revealed in the early years of the *Hijra*) when Islam was passing through the severest of trials and hardships, and the fate of the new faith was virtually trembling in the balance; nay, so far as worldly causes were concerned, its fate was practically sealed in view of the opposition that remains unparalleled in all history.

It cannot be objected here that after a few centuries of triumph, Muslims too began to decline, thus rendering the argument ineffective. *Firstly*, the argument, as borne out by the history of all revealed religions of the world, does not relate to communities in their ordinary temporal affairs but to those contending on religious issues. The argument particularly relates to the time when a divine Messenger makes his appearance and extends to the period for which a new-born community sticks to the teachings of their Prophet. It would be absurd to think that divine succour should continue for ever, even after a people has become dead in faith and works. *Secondly*, it should be remembered that the present-day decline of

64. And remember the time when ^aWe took a covenant from you and ^braised high above you the Mount, saying, 'Hold fast that which We have given you and bear in mind what is therein, that you may be saved.'⁷⁰

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا
مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

^a2 : 84, 94 ; 4 : 155. ^b 7 : 172.

Muslims as well as the present-day temporal ascendancy of Christians is itself in accordance with the prophecies of the Holy Prophet of Islam, and hence it is rather a proof of the truth of Islam than a proof against it. Moreover, the wheel is fast turning and the day is not far off when, according to yet another prophecy of the Holy Prophet, Islam will once more gain ascendancy through the Promised Messiah of whom the Prophet himself has spoken as his own image.

(2) The other meaning relates to the spiritual sense. God says, there are now four claimants in the field, i.e., Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians. Each one of these claims to enjoy true spiritual contact with God. But as everything in this world possesses certain distinguishing marks and properties which go to establish its identity, so is the case with man's spiritual connection with God which is characterized by certain distinguishing marks or special properties; and the verse goes on to say that one of these distinguishing marks is that people enjoying true spiritual connection with God "have their reward with their Lord and no fear comes upon them nor do they grieve," i.e., God's connection brings with it perfect peace of mind and complete tranquillity of heart. One is not left in the dark, doubting all the time in the depth of his heart whether one is treading the right path or not, with gnawing grief at one's past actions and disquieting fears about the future. The heavenly life of a true believer begins in this very world, and this is why the Quran says that a person

truly related to God inherits two Heavens, one in this world and the other in the next (55:47). So in the verse under comment God invites the different claimants to search in their hearts for the peace and tranquillity of mind attending true belief and then say whether they possess it.

Yet another significance of the verse is that lip-profession of a truth is nothing in the sight of God. The Jews professed the truth; but as it did not find its way into their hearts, they stumbled at every step and brought down God's displeasure on their heads. The verse forcefully points out that it did not matter whether one was apparently a Jew, a Christian, a Sabian or, for that matter, a Muslim. If the faith was confined only to the lip, it was a dead thing, without life and without any motive power in it. In order to be really useful and to become really acceptable in the sight of God, إِيْمَان or faith should not be a mere lip-profession but something rooted deep in the heart with living and healthy branches spreading all around. This was a principle of which even the new-born community of Islam needed to be constantly reminded.

As stated under Important Words, the name الصَّابِقِينَ has been applied to a number of peoples, and it may rightly apply to one or all of them. In fact, the larger the number, the greater the force of the argument contained in the verse.

70. Important Words :

مِيثَاق (covenant) is derived from مِثَق, i.e. it was or became firm and established. اذْكُرْ means,

65. Then you turned back thereafter; and had it not been for Allah's grace towards you and His mercy, you would surely have been of the losers.⁷¹

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

he made it firm and fast; he bound or tied it firmly and strongly. ميثاق means, a firmly made promise; a covenant (Aqrab & Lane). It should be noted that every commandment of God has the force of a covenant for those who believe, because once an individual or a people believe in God and accept His guidance, they, as it were, enter into a covenant with Him that they will obey all His commandments, a formal agreement not being necessary. See also 2:28.

رفعنا (We raised high) is derived from رفع which means, he raised or lifted a thing or person; he raised a person in rank, honour, position or dignity; he took a report or complaint to a person in authority (Mufradāt & Aqrab). It also means, to make a thing tower above another standing beside it. We read in Ḥadith رفع لنا صخرة طويلة لها ظل *i.e.* a big stone giving good shade was raised above us *i.e.* we found ourselves beside a high shady stone (Bukhārī, ch. on *Hijra*).

فوق (above) is derived from فوق meaning, he surpassed it or him; he stood higher than it or him. Thus فوق is the opposite of "beneath" meaning "above," both literally and figuratively (Aqrab). It is also used to denote a place higher than that which one is occupying. The Quran says: اذ جاءوكم من فوقكم *i.e.* when the enemy made a descent on you from a higher position (33:11).

الطور (the Mount) means: (1) a hill or mountain; (2) the mount Ṭūr or Sinai (Mufradāt & Aqrab). Thus, it is both a common and a proper name.

Commentary :

In this verse the Quran again reverts to the previous subject, *i.e.*, the iniquities of the Israelites, but in a different field. The verse refers to the time when Moses went up the Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and left his followers standing at the foot of the Mount (Exod. 19:17). So the covenant spoken of in the verse refers to the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on this occasion.

The clause *We raised high above you the Mount*, does not mean that Mount Sinai was physically lifted up to hang over the heads of the Israelites. It only means that the covenant was taken at a time when the Israelites were standing at the foot of the mountain—a meaning quite consistent with the Arabic idiom as explained under Important Words. The raising of the Mount above the Israelites has been ascribed to God, because it was He Who had commanded them to come and stand at the foot of the Mount.

The verse may also refer to the scene when the Mount Sinai was terribly shaken with an earthquake, while the Israelites were camping near it (Exod. 19:18). On such an occasion the shaking of a high mountain peak appears as if it were hanging over the heads of those standing near it.

71. Important Words :

فضل (grace) is derived from the verb فضل meaning: (1) it remained, the expression being used when a portion remains out of a larger number or quantity, the rest being given away or

66. And surely, you have known *the end* of those amongst you, who transgressed in the matter of ^athe Sabbath. So We said to them, ^bBe ye apes, despised.⁷²

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدُوا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ
فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

^a4 : 48, 155 ; 7 : 164 ; 16 : 125. ^b5 : 61 ; 7 : 167.

consumed ; (2) it was in excess, or it was over and above a certain measure. Thus the noun فضل means : (1) something that is in excess or additional ; (2) abundance ; (3) a free gift, the giving of which is not obligatory on the giver ; (4) a favour or grace or bounty (Aqrab & Lane). The word فضل is generally, though not always, spoken of such favours as pertain to temporal or worldly things (e.g. 62 : 11). See also the word رحمة below.

رحمة (mercy) is derived from رحم meaning : (1) he showed mercy or compassion ; (2) he was kind or tender ; (3) he was beneficent ; (4) he forgave. Thus رحمة means, mercy or compassion or kindness or tenderness or beneficence or forgiveness or inclination to show one of these. As رحم (riḥm) means the womb of a woman, the word رحمة would further give the significance of tenderness or compassion as shown by a mother (Lane). رحمة in contrast to فضل (for which see above) is generally spoken of such acts of God's kindness or mercy as relate to religious or spiritual matters. This is why the Holy Prophet has instructed his followers to ask for God's رحمة when entering a mosque for Prayers, and for His فضل when coming out of it after Prayers (Tirmidhi).

Commentary :

After receiving God's commandments on the Mount, the Israelites, instead of strengthening their connection with the Lord, showed laxity and carelessness in observing His behests (Num. 11 : 1) ; but as God wanted to uplift them and bestow His grace and mercy on them in matters temporal as well as spiritual,

He forgave them their sins and saved them from being the losers.

72. Important Words :

السبت (the Sabbath) is derived from سبت meaning : (1) he rested ; (2) he cut or broke a thing ; (3) he shaved his hair ; (4) he observed the Sabbath. The noun سبت (Sabbath) signifies that day of the week which is observed as a sacred day in which no worldly work is done (Aqrab & Mufradāt). Among the Jews, Saturday was (and still is) observed as a sacred day which was passed in joyfulness and rest from work as well as in contemplation, sacrifice, holy convocation, etc. (Jew. Enc. under "Sabbath").

قردة (apes) is the plural of القرد (the ape) which is derived from the verb قرد meaning, he clove to the ground ; he lay in dust. اقرد means, he was or became abject or mean. القردة means, apes or monkeys (Lane).

خاسئين (despised) is the plural of خاسئ which is derived from خسا. They say خسا الكلب i.e. the dog moved away as a result of being driven away ; خسا الرجل الكلب means, the man drove away the dog, despising it. Thus the word is both transitive and intransitive. الخاسئ means, one who moves away despised by others or one who is spurned by others (Aqrab). الخاسئ of which the plural is خاسئين is a word which, according to the rules of Arabic grammar, is used about rational beings only, the word used with regard to animals being خاسئة.

Commentary :

The verse speaks of the Sabbath and its violation by the Israelites. It is pointed out that

67. Thus We made it "an example to those of its time and to those who came after it, and a lesson to those who fear God."⁷³

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَ
مَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

^{a5} : 39.

God's covenant made it binding on the Israelites, among other things, to keep the Sabbath (Exod. 20 : 8—11) i.e. observe Saturday as a sacred day devoted to spiritual joyfulness and holy convocation, etc. but, recalcitrant as usual, some among them violated the sanctity of the Sabbath and did not observe it, which brought on them God's wrath, disgrace and humiliation (Neh. 13 : 15—18 & Jer. 17 : 21—23). The violation of the Sabbath was a great sin, inasmuch as it indicated that the Israelites wanted to remain engrossed in worldly affairs and did not like to pay any heed to religion, not even for a single day out of a whole week.

It is wrong to infer from the word قردة (apes) that the profaners of the Sabbath were actually transformed into apes. The incident has been related by the Quran in two other places (5 : 61, 62 and 7 : 167—169) and even a cursory study of these verses would show that these people did not actually turn into apes. The word "apes" has been used figuratively meaning that they became abject and mean, like monkeys, the transformation being not in body or form but in character and spirit.

A further proof of this is to be found in the fact that it is a general rule of Arabic grammar that the suffix *ون* or *ين* is added to the plurals of such words as refer to rational beings only. In conformity with this rule, the qualifying word used in the verse about قردة خاسئين which shows that the word قردة (apes) here alludes not to irrational but to rational beings, i.e., human beings who had developed the character of apes. Had the Quran meant their actual transformation into apes, it would have used the form خاسنة and not خاسئين.

Many learned Commentators of the past have also held the above view. For instance, Mujāhid who is considered to be one of the greatest Commentators of the Quran, being one of the تابعين (the immediate successors of the Holy Prophet's Companions) says : "They were not actually transformed into apes ; only their hearts were changed. God has used the expression figuratively" (Kathīr). Other eminent authorities have also held the same view, interpreting the words قردة خاسئين (apes despised) as اذلة صاغرين i.e. "abject and humiliated men."

By using the word قردة (apes) about a section of the Jews, God means to point to the fact that just as apes or monkeys are an abject and despised species which, in spite of possessing, in an extraordinary degree, the habit of mimicking or copying others—a habit which, if well directed, should result in progress—ever remain where they are, as if going about in a circle and making no headway at all, similarly the Jews will always remain humiliated in the world, and in spite of wonderful resources in wealth and education will never be able to gain any stronghold on the earth. It is interesting to note that, as explained under Important Words, even in the root meaning of the word قردة there is the sense of abjectness and humiliation as well as that of grovelling in the dust. And what is still more interesting is the fact that of all the animals found in the world the advanced people of the West should think of man being descended from the ape.

73. Important Words :

نَكَالًا (an example) is derived from نَكَل. They say نَكَلَ فُلَانٌ i.e. he inflicted on him such a

68. And *remember* when Moses said to his people, 'Allah commands you to slaughter a cow,' they said, 'Dost thou make a jest of us?' He said, 'I seek refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant.'⁷⁴

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا
بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ
مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

69. They said, 'Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what she is.' He answered, 'God says, it is a cow, neither old nor young, full-grown, between the two; now do what you are commanded.'⁷⁵

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ
إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ
فَاعْمَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

70. They said, 'Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what colour she is. He answered, 'God says, it is a cow of a dun colour, pure and rich in tone; delighting the beholders'.⁷⁶

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ
إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقِعٌ لَوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النُّظُرِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

punishment as to make him an example for others (Aqrab).

Commentary :

All punishment, if wisely directed, should serve a twofold purpose: (1) to inflict pain on the offender so as to make him reform in future; (2) to make it a lesson for others so that they may beware of falling into a similar error. But, as the latter part of the verse points out, only such men benefit by punishment as are God-fearing.

74. Important Words :

هزرا (a jest) means : (1) jest ; (2) the object or butt of a joke (Lisān). See also 2 : 14.

Commentary :

Here begins an account of another Israelite wrong which was allied to their worship of the calf. Though the calf mentioned in 2 : 52 was destroyed, yet veneration for the cow lingered in their hearts. The verse, along with those that follow, will be explained under verse 72 below.

75. Important Words :

فارض (old) is derived from فرض. They say

فرضت البقرة meaning, the cow became old (Lane).

عوان (full-grown) is derived from عان. They say عانت المرأة i.e. the woman attained middle age. So عوان is said of one that has attained middle age. الحرب العوان means, the hottest and bloodiest part of a battle (Aqrab).

Commentary :

See under 2 : 72.

76. Important Words :

صفراء (of a dun colour) is the feminine from اصفر which signifies a thing having the colour of gold; yellow-coloured or saffron-coloured (Aqrab).

فاقع (pure and rich) is derived from فقع which means : (1) it was of a rich, pure and unmixed colour; or (2) its golden colour was rich and pure. فاقع means : (1) possessing pure and rich colour; (2) possessing rich and pure golden colour. Thus it is both general and particular (Aqrab).

Commentary :

See under 2 : 72.

71. They said, 'Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what she is, for *all such* cows appear to us alike; and if Allah please, we shall indeed be guided.'⁷⁷

72. He answered: 'God says, it is a cow "not broken in to plough the earth or water the tilth; one without blemish; of one colour'. They said, 'Now hast thou brought the truth'. Then they slaughtered her, though they would rather not do it.'⁷⁸

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشْبَهُ
عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ
وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا شِيْءَ فِيهَا قَالُوا الشَّنْ
عُ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

467 : 16.

77. Important Words :

البقر (cows) is the plural of البقرة (a cow). The word is used for both male and female (Aqrab).

Commentary :

See under 2 : 72.

78. Commentary :

The Israelites had lived for a long time among the Egyptians who had great veneration for the cow. Thus reverence for the cow had crept into the minds of the Israelites as well. This is why, when they made an idol for themselves, they made it in the shape of a calf (Quran 2 : 52 & Exod. 32 : 4). It was, therefore, quite in the fitness of things that, in order to root out this evil inclination from the hearts of the Israelites, they should have been repeatedly commanded to sacrifice the cow. And this was actually the case (Num. 19 : 1—9; Lev. 4 : 1-21; 16 : 3, 11; etc.). A nation which freely slaughters an animal can never think of deifying it.

In the verses under comment i.e. vv. 68 to 72 mention is made of Moses having ordered the Israelites to sacrifice a cow. It appears that at first they were bidden to sacrifice an ordinary cow, but it seems they had a particular cow which served as a pet among them and they had a natural misgiving that the order pertained

to that cow. So they repeatedly asked Moses to specify the cow which God meant to be slaughtered, and as a result of their questionings some conditions were added to specify the animal. Finally, when the description given by Moses corresponded to the particular cow which they had in view, they had perforce to say, *Now hast thou brought the truth*, the words showing that from the very beginning they had in their mind some particular cow to which they thought the command pertained. Caught in their own net, they were guided aright and had to slaughter the very cow which served as a pet among them and thus a great step was taken to uproot the evil from their hearts.

This incident finds mention in the Bible also (Num. 19 : 1—9). The Quranic version, however, differs slightly from that of the Bible. According to the Quran, the Israelites were at first ordered to slaughter an ordinary cow, and it was only on their repeated questioning that descriptions were added to specify it. On the other hand, the Biblical version makes no mention of this questioning, but tells us that at the very outset the Israelites were ordered to slaughter a cow answering a particular description. Again, the narrative of the Quran shows that it was with great reluctance that the Israelites finally complied

9. 73. And remember the time when you slew a person and differed among yourselves about it; and Allah would bring to light what you concealed.⁷⁹

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَرَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

74. Then, We said, 'Smite him (the murderer) for a part of the offence against him (the murdered person).' Thus "Allah gives life to the dead and shows you His signs that you may understand."⁸⁰

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

⁷⁹ 2 : 180.

with the command, but the Bible throws no light on the manner in which the divine behest was carried out. It is not difficult to see on which side the truth lies. It is too much to believe that the Israelites, who were ever ready to quarrel with Moses on receipt of an injunction against their wishes, should have carried out without question the order relating to the slaughter of a cow.

79. Important Words :

قَتَلْتُمْ (you slew) is derived from قَتَلَ which means : (1) he killed ; (2) he attempted to kill ; (3) he rendered a person like unto one killed (see also 2 : 62).

نَفْسًا (a person) has been used here as نَفْسٌ i.e. in an indefinite or undefined form. It may, according to the rules of the Arabic language, refer either to an unimportant person that need not be named, or to a very important personage ; for sometimes a word used as نَفْسٌ denotes a sense of greatness (Mutawwal).

فَادَرَأْتُمْ (differed among yourselves) is derived from دَرَأَ meaning, he repelled it or he thrust it back. اِدْرَأْتُمْ is originally اِدْرَأْتُمْ meaning : (1) you repelled one another by casting blame or responsibility on one another ; (2) you disagreed or differed among yourselves (Aqrab & Lane).

تَكْتُمُونَ (you concealed). See 2 : 34.

Commentary :

See under next verse.

80. Important Words :

مَوْتَى (the dead i.e. dead persons) is the plural of مَيِّتٌ (a dead person) which means : (1) one really dead ; (2) one like dead ; (3) one dying or nearing death (Lane). See also under 2 : 20, 2 : 29 & 2 : 57.

Commentary :

In the preceding verses God related some of the misdeeds of the Israelites in order to bring home to them the fact that in face of such conduct on their part it was idle to expect that God would continue to bestow favours on them. In the verses under comment i.e. 2 : 73, 74, 75, God recounts one of their final misdeeds which filled the cup of their iniquity to overflowing and sealed their fate.

The Quran has not named the person slain, but when read with the context and the relevant facts of history, the verses appear to apply to the murder of a Companion of the Holy Prophet by the Jews at Medina. Following are some of the details of the incident which was the first public act of enmity perpetrated by the Medinite Jews against Muslims.

The Holy Prophet, on his arrival at Medina, entered into a treaty with the Jews. But the growing prosperity and success of Islam gradually roused the jealousy of the Jewish

leaders and some of them began secretly to incite their people against the Muslims. The crisis came with the Battle of Badr when the jealousy of the Jews reached its highest pitch. The result was that the Jews were emboldened and assumed a highly insolent attitude towards Islām. A short time after the said battle, a Muslim lady happened to go to a Jew's shop to make some purchases. The shopkeeper and the other Jews sitting at the shop behaved very insultingly toward her, and the shopkeeper mischievously fastened the lower part of her mantle to the upper part thereof with a thorn so that when, being unable to bear their insults, she unsuspectingly rose to depart, part of her body became naked, at which the shopkeeper and other Jews burst out laughing. This made the helpless lady cry for help. A Muslim happened to be near. Hearing her cry, he rushed to the place and in the fight that ensued the shopkeeper was killed, whereupon the Jews fell upon the Muslim and murdered him and the situation threatened to develop into a sort of a riot. This happened towards the close of the second year of the *Hijra*. It is with reference to this murder that the preceding verse says, *and remember the time when you slew a person and differed among yourselves about it*. The Jews differed among themselves about the murder, for none of them admitted that he had committed it, though all adopted a highly insulting attitude towards the Holy Prophet when he exhorted the Jewish leaders to fear God and abstain from jeopardising the peace of the city. The result was a regular fight between the Jewish tribe of Banū Qainuqā' and the Muslims resulting in the banishment of the tribe from Medina (Hishām, Ṭabarī & Zurqānī).

But the real responsibility lay on the ring-leader of the Medinite Jews—Ka'b b. Ashraf—who had taken a leading part in inciting the Jewish tribes and kindling their hatred against the Muslims. The man was looked upon as their leader by the Jews of the whole of Arabia

He was a very rich man and a poet of eminence. Ka'b was also a party to the treaty which was concluded between the Jews and the Holy Prophet on the arrival of the latter in Medina. Inwardly, however, he harboured deep hatred against Islam and its Holy Founder which grew in intensity as Islam made progress. When the Muslims won a decisive victory at Badr, Ka'b, realizing that Islam was taking a deep root in the soil, thought it imperative to make strenuous efforts to extirpate the new faith. So he at once started for Mecca and there, with the aid of his powerful eloquence and stirring verses, set ablaze the fire of enmity and hatred that was already smouldering in the hearts of the Quraish, and with the skirts of the sacred curtain of the Ka'ba in their hands, he made them take a solemn oath that they would know no rest until they had destroyed Islam and its Founder. Thereafter he toured among other tribes of Arabia and stirred them up against the Prophet and the small body of his followers. Having lighted up the fire of hatred and enmity throughout the land, he returned to Medina and began to create mischief by making scurrilous poems in which mention was made of Muslim women and the ladies nearly related to the Holy Prophet, in the most offensive language. These verses were widely published and were publicly recited by the enemies of Islam. The result of these tactics was that feelings of extreme hatred were excited in the minds of the Jews who assumed an openly hostile attitude to the Holy Prophet and his Companions, throwing to the winds their treaty obligations. It was this attitude of the Jews which emboldened them to commit such offences as the one referred to above, in open defiance of the terms of the treaty they had concluded with the Holy Prophet on his arrival at Medina (Hishām, Zurqānī & Dāwūd).

Thus the real culprit responsible for the assassination of the Muslim referred to above was no other than Ka'b bin Ashraf, the bold

75. Then "your hearts became hardened after that, till they were like stones or harder still; for of stones indeed there are some out of which gush forth streams, and of them there are some out of which flows water when they cleave asunder. And indeed of them there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do."⁸¹

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ
أَوْ أَشَدَّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ
الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ
وَإِنْ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ
بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

٥٥ : 14 ; 6 : 44 ; 57 : 17.

and wicked Jewish leader, who had instigated the Jews to rebellion and breach of faith. He even did not hesitate to plot against the life of the Holy Prophet (Zurqānī). His guilt was an established fact. He was guilty of high treason against the State and was the arch-enemy of peace. So he was put to death by the Prophet's command in the third year of *Hijra*. It is to this sentence of death that the present verse refers when it says: *then We said, "Smite him (the murderer i.e. the real culprit) for a part of the offence against him (the murdered person), which meant that the sentence of death was only a partial punishment of the offence, the rest of the punishment being reserved for the Hereafter. In fact, there are certain sins which are atoned for by the punishment which is inflicted for them on the offender in this world. But the offence of wilfully killing an innocent man and particularly one who is a righteous servant of the Lord, is not adequately punished with the execution of the murderer, which is only a partial punishment. The real punishment of such an offence is Hell (4 : 94).*

By using the word قَتَلَ (you slew) in the plural number, the Quran hints that the whole Jewish community of Medina was responsible for it. For the sentence of death, however, the ring-leader, who had brought about a tense atmos-

phere of hatred and enmity, was selected.

The clause, *thus Allah gives life to the dead*, signifies that retaliation is an effective form of giving life to the dead, for punishing the offender prevents the would-be assassins from committing further murders, and thus many who would otherwise have been victims of assassination are saved. That retaliation is a sure means of giving life is clearly alluded to in the Quran itself. We read in 2 : 180, *and there is life for you in the law of retaliation, O men of understanding.*

Finally, it may be noted that these verses have also been applied to the attempted murder of Jesus by the Jews (for which see Part I of the Quran published by Anjuman Taraqqī Islām, Qadian, in 1916), but recent research strongly tends to support the above explanation. It may also be noted that the interpretation put on this verse by some Commentators that a really dead person was restored to life is quite erroneous, being unsupported by the context of the verse as well as the authentic teaching of Islam. It is a mere legend which has no foundation in fact.

81. Important Words :

يَشَقَّقُ (cleave asunder) which is originally يَشَقُّ (cleave asunder) which is derived from شَقَّ meaning, he cut it open or he clove it. تَشَقَّقُ means, it clove or broke asunder (Aqrab).

76. Do you expect that they will believe you when a party of them hear the word of Allah, then "pervert it after they have understood it, and they know the consequences thereof."⁸²

اَتَتَّطَعُونَ اَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ
يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَلْجِئُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ
وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

^a3 : 79 ; 4 : 47 ; 5 : 14, 42.

Commentary :

The murder of the innocent Muslim referred to in the preceding verses sealed the fate of the Medinite Jews who thereafter became more and more hardened, their hearts becoming like stones or even worse.

The verse goes on to say that even lifeless things like stones are useful, but the Jews, although rational beings possessing understanding and descended from holy men, have become so hardened as virtually to become worse than stones. Stones have functions to perform; but as they possess no volition, their work can bring them no reward. Deeds are in fact of two kinds, *firstly* those which are performed through volition or exercise of will, and *secondly* those which are performed not through volition but under some natural law. According to Islam, it is only the deeds of the former class that bring reward; but the deeds of the latter class, though unable to bring a reward, are also sometimes useful. Most of the Jews, however, had become so depraved that, far from performing any act of virtue out of a desire to be virtuous, they did not even involuntarily perform anything that might be called virtuous. They had become worse than stones; for even from stones there comes out water which people profit by.

It has, however, been added that these remarks do not apply to the whole nation; for some of the Israelites were, no doubt, swayed by the fear of God. Of these the Quran says: *Of them (the hearts) there are some that*

humble themselves for fear of Allah. It may be noted that the pronoun *ها* (them) in the clause, *and indeed of them there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah*, stands for *قلوب* (hearts) and not for *حجارة* (stones). The fact that of the two pronouns in the verse the first refers to *حجارة* (stones) and this one to *قلوب* (hearts) need not create any doubt. The Quran contains many instances of what is termed *انتشار ضمائر* i.e. where similar pronouns occurring in the same verse stand for different nouns. For example, we read in 48:10: *That you may believe in Allah and His Messenger and may help him and honour him, and glorify Him morning and evening.* In this verse the pronoun 'him' refers to the Holy Prophet in the first two places and to God in the third.

The sentence, *for of stones indeed there are some out of which gush forth streams, and of them there are some out of which flows water when they cleave asunder*, signifies that even among lifeless things there are grades, some being more useful than others; and the Quran hints that we should recognise the difference in the grade and usefulness of all things. Everything must have its due, whether small or great.

82. Important Words :

يُحْرِفُونَ (they pervert it) is derived from *حرف* which means, he turned a thing aside; he made a thing incline away, the infinitive *حرف* meaning the side or border of a thing. *حرف القول* means: (1) he changed or removed a word or speech or

77. And "when they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe', and when they meet one another in private, they say, 'Do you inform them of what Allah has unfolded to you, that they may thereby argue with you before your Lord. Will you not then understand?' " 83

وَإِذَا الْقَوَّالُونَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِغُضُفٍ
إِلَى بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
لِيُجَاجِلُوكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ٨٣

2 : 15 ; 3 : 120 ; 5 : 62.

writing from its proper place; (2) he made a word or speech or writing incline from its position so as to give it a wrong significance (Aqrab & Mufradât). Thus تحريف may be either by (1) omitting or adding or changing a word or sentence; or by (2) perverting or putting a wrong interpretation on it.

Commentary :

The verse is addressed to Muslims. The Israelites having been reduced to such a condition as to have become hardened like stones or even worse, Muslims cannot expect them to subscribe to their belief or act faithfully to them. The Israelites had become utterly devoid of faith and all sense of honesty. They would hear the word of God revealed to the Holy Prophet and when they went back to their people, they would wilfully pervert it and thus try to mislead them and turn them against the Holy Prophet and his followers by means of deliberate misrepresentation. Nothing good can be expected from such people and nothing can prevent them from breaking agreements and their plighted word.

83. Important Words :

فَتَحَ (has unfolded) means : (1) he opened ; (2) he unfolded or disclosed ; (3) he taught ; (4) he gained victory over a place or a people (Aqrab).

عِنْدَ (before) gives a number of meanings, e.g., with, by, at, near, in the presence of, in the

opinion of or in the estimation of, etc. (Lane). See also 2 : 275.

Commentary :

The verse mentions another class of Jews who acted hypocritically. When they mixed with Muslims, they chimed in with them from worldly motives, confirming the prophecies contained in their Books about the Holy Prophet. But when they were away from Muslims and mixed with their own people, they behaved in quite a different way. On such occasions other members of the community would reproach them for their enlightening the Muslims on what God had revealed to them, i.e., for letting the Muslims know the prophecies about the Holy Prophet contained in the Jewish scriptures. In that case, they would say, the Muslims would argue with them before God, blaming them before Him on the Day of Judgement for their rejection of the Holy Prophet. And yet they well knew the prophecies which spoke of his advent and bore witness to his truth. That there will be such contentions on the Day of Judgement has also been mentioned elsewhere in the Quran which says : *Then surely on the Day of Resurrection you will contend with one another in the presence of your Lord* (39 : 32). It is a weakness of human nature that a culprit, even when knowing that the judge knows the truth, tries to put up pleas in his favour. Moreover, there is a sect among the Jews who, against the teachings of their own scriptures, hold that God does

78. Do they not know that "Allah knows what they conceal and what they disclose?"⁸⁴ أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

79. And some of them are illiterate; they know not the Book but *their own* false notions and they do nothing but conjecture.⁸⁵ وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانٍ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

80. Woe, therefore, to those who write the book with their own hands, and then say, 'This is from Allah,' that they may take for it ^a paltry price. Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.⁸⁶ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

^a11 : 6 ; 35 : 39. ^b2 : 175 ; 3 : 200 ; 13 : 27.

not know the details of all things, and quite possibly those who reproached their brethren for disclosing such prophecies to the Muslims held a similar view and feared lest the latter should place these facts before God on the Day of Resurrection and blame them in the presence of their Lord.

84. Commentary :

The verse points out that the Jews know that their own scriptures teach that God knows both what is hidden and what is disclosed (Jer. 16 : 17 ; Dan. 2 : 22). So even if they do not disclose their prophecies to the Muslims, God knows the whole truth and He will judge accordingly.

85. Important Words :

اميون (illiterate persons) is the plural of امى which means, one who can neither write nor read. The word is said to have been derived from ام (mother), for an امى (illiterate person) continues, as it were, the same as when born of his mother (Aqrab). امى also signifies: (1) one not having a revealed scripture; (2) one belonging to the Arab nation (Lane).

امانى (false notions) derived from منى is the plural of امنية meaning: (1) a desire; (2) an object of desire; (3) falsehood; (4) reading or recitation (Aqrab).

Commentary :

There is yet a third class among the Jews who have no knowledge of the Book at all. They have only their own false notions or desires, and, instead of trying to understand the Book and basing their faith on conviction, they depend upon their own whims. Their knowledge is not based on God's Book. They rather twist the Book according to their own vain desires and false notions. It is a case of the wish being father to the thought. As the word امنية also means, reading or recitation, the verse in this sense would mean that the Jews only know the letter of the Law and have lost all contact with its spirit. They read the Book but do not understand it.

86. Important Words :

ويل (woe) means: (1) the coming or befalling of some calamity, misfortune or sorrow; (2) punishment; (3) perdition. The expression

81. And they say, 'The Fire shall not touch us except for a *small* number of days.' Say, 'Have you taken a promise from Allah? Then, Allah will never break His promise. Or, do you say of Allah what you know not?'^{a7}

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً قُلْ
اتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَكُمْ
أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ٨١

^a3 : 25 ; 5 : 19. ^b54 : 44.

ويلك or ويلك or ويلك or ويلك etc. is used as a warning for some coming sorrow or misfortune (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

There were Jews who composed books or parts thereof and then gave them out as the word of God. This malpractice was common among the Jews and other peoples. In addition therefore to the canonical Books of the Bible, there are a number of books which are supposed to be revealed, so that it has now become impossible to distinguish the revealed Books from those not revealed. Another malpractice of the Jews was that they distorted the meaning of the divine word. They themselves wrote a whole book or part thereof and declared it to be based on Biblical evidence ; while, as a matter of fact, it was opposed to this evidence. Those responsible for this were responsible not only for their own misdeeds, namely, fabricating and distorting the Word of God, but also for the misdeeds of their followers who were led by their example to commit one or all of the following acts : (1) tampering with the Word of God (2 : 76) ; (2) preferring worldliness to religion (2 : 77) ; and (3) following their own vain desires and false notions (2 : 79). Hence, while speaking of them, the Quran uses the word ويل (woe) in order to warn them and remind them of the seriousness of their offence.

Some Christian writers have argued that the verse under comment proves that the Jewish and Christian scriptures were intact at the

time of the Holy Prophet. This inference is absolutely unjustified. For tampering with the text does not necessarily mean tampering with a genuine text. One who tampers with a version of a false book which he believes to be true is as liable to blame as the one who tampers with a genuine scripture. Hence, the warning to the People of the Book against tampering with the Bible cannot be cited as proof of the existence of the true Bible at the time of the Holy Prophet.

The words, *paltry price*, do not mean that the taking of a good price would be lawful. The words have been used to point out that whatever price they may take would be paltry in view of the great loss they would be suffering thereby. Elsewhere, the Quran says : *the benefit of this world is little* (4 : 78).

In the last clause the Quran repeats the words, *Woe to them*, twice, saying : *Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn*. This is to point out that by so doing the Israelites are committing two offences : (1) writing down a thing falsely and (2) doing it with the intention of earning some worldly benefit. As the offence is double, the punishment also will be double.

87. Important Words :

النار (the Fire) means fire both as a source of light and of heat, the latter aspect being more dominant. Another word derived from the same root is نور meaning light, which is used without reference to the element of heat.

82. Aye, whoso does evil and is encompassed by his sins,—those are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.⁸⁸

بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

The word النار (the Fire) has come to be used about “Hell,” the punishment of which will consist of fire (Aqrah). It is significant that whereas the blessings of Heaven have been metaphorically spoken of as “streams of water”, the punishment of Hell has been called “fire.”

Commentary :

After recounting some malpractices of the Jews, the Quran proceeds to explain the root cause of their arrogance and hard-heartedness. These evil practices of the Jews, the Quran points out, are due to the wrong notion that they were immune from punishment (Jew. Enc. under Gehenna), or, if they will at all be punished, the punishment will be very slight. It is recorded that at the time of the Holy Prophet, a section of the Jews thought that the punishment of the Jews would not last more than forty days (Jarir, under 2:81). Others regarded even this as too long, and reduced it to seven days (Jarir, *ibid*). As for modern Jews, Sale says: “It is a received opinion among the Jews at present, that no person (from among the Jews), be he ever so wicked, or of whatever sect, shall remain in Hell above eleven months or at most a year, except Dathan and Abiram and atheists (from among the Jews) who will be tormented there to all eternity” (Wherry, i. 318).

The concluding portion of the verse *i.e.* have you taken a promise from Allah. . . . ? has been added to point out that the matter of salvation does not rest on the wish of a person or people but only on the grace and

mercy of Allah Who has prescribed a law for it. This law the Quran proceeds to explain in the following two verses.

88. Important Words :

سَيِّئَةً (evil) is derived from ساء meaning, it or he was or became evil or bad. So سَيِّئَةً means, anything that is evil or bad. The Arabs say قول سيئ *i.e.* an evil word or an evil opinion (Aqrah).

خطيئة (sins) is derived from خطأ meaning, he committed a mistake or an offence or a sin. The word خطيئة, though translated here as plural, is really singular, meaning, a sinful act or an offence, whether intentional or otherwise (Aqrah, Mufradāt & Lane).

Commentary :

This and the following verse prescribe the law of punishment and reward, or, in other words, of Hell and Heaven. The Quran here begins with the law pertaining to punishment, because in the preceding verse the Jews claimed immunity from punishment. The Jews based their claim on the fact that they were a chosen people of God, being descended from Prophets. The Quran strongly repudiates this idea, saying, that Hell and Heaven have not been earmarked for any race. The entry of man into Hell or Heaven depends on what beliefs he holds and what actions he performs in this world. If a man holds wrong beliefs and performs sinful deeds, he will go to Hell, irrespective of the fact whether he is a Jew or a Christian or anybody else.

83. But they who believe and do good works,—those are the dwellers of Heaven ; therein shall they abide.⁸⁹

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ

هُم فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

In the verse under comment, the word *سَيِّئَةً* (evil) read with the context signifies rejection of the Holy Prophet by the Jews, thus referring to the condition as to wrong belief, and the word *خطيئة* (sin) signifies their general misdeeds, thus referring to the condition as to sinful actions. It must, however, be noted that, as occasional stumbling is generally pardonable with the Merciful God, provided the belief is good and provided further that there is an honest effort on one's part to live righteously, the words, *he is encompassed by his sins*, have been used to point to the fact that only such misdeeds can drive one to Hell as are so large in number as to virtually encompass a man, just as an invading army encompasses a besieged force, leaving it no way out.

Coming as it does after a narration of the wrong beliefs and sinful deeds of the Israelites, the verse warns the Jews that with such a black record they should be ashamed to claim immunity from the punishment of Hell-fire.

89. Important Words :

خالدون (shall abide) signifies a long time but not necessarily time without end. See note on 2 : 26.

Commentary :

This verse sententiously sets forth the divine law relating to salvation or the entry into Heaven.

Almost all the religions of the world hold salvation as a monopoly for their adherents

and condemn others to everlasting Hell. Islam has raised its powerful voice against such notions, declaring them to be false and baseless. It does not lend the least support to the idea that salvation will come as a free gift to a certain class of men in whose case punishment, if resorted to at all, will only be a nominal one. According to Islam salvation can be attained only by combining true faith with good actions. The condition as to true faith serves as a warning to those people who reject certain Prophets of God and still hope to attain salvation because they belong to a specified class and are descended from certain holy persons. And the condition of good actions serves as a warning to those who are negligent in deeds, thinking that mere enrolment in the category of believers will bring salvation. Islam would have none of them.

The word *خالدون* (shall abide) signifies a long, long time but not necessarily eternity. As will be noted, the word has been used in verses 82 and 83 both with regard to the inmates of Hell and of Heaven. This should not give rise to the misunderstanding either that both the punishment of Hell and the reward of Heaven are eternal or that both will come to an end after a long time. The Quran makes it clear elsewhere that though both the punishment of Hell and the reward of Heaven are meant to last long, it is only the reward of Heaven which is everlasting (11 : 107—109).

R.10 84. And *remember the time* when "We took a covenant from the children of Israel: 'You shall worship *nothing* but Allah and *show* kindness to parents and to kindred and orphans and the poor, and speak to men kindly and ^bobserve Prayer, and pay the Zakât'; then you turned away in aversion, except a few of you."^a

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا
اللَّهَ ۚ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ
وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا ۚ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ

مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

^a4:155; 5:13. ^b2:44, 111; 4:78; 6:73; 22:79; 24:57; 30:32.

90. Important Words:

ميثاق (a covenant). See 2:64.

Commentary:

After setting forth the attitude of the Israelites of the Holy Prophet's time towards the Prophets of God and their own scriptures, the Quran draws their attention to the teachings which they had been required to follow but which they ignored.

The verse under comment does not refer to any particular covenant, but to the vices which were rife among the Jews at the time and which were forbidden them in the Bible. Worship of any object other than God is repeatedly forbidden in the Jewish scriptures (Exod. 20:3—6). Again, kindness to parents is also among the injunctions (Exod. 20:12). Similarly, for the kind treatment of kinsmen, clear injunctions have been given (Lev. 19:17, 18; Exod. 21:9, and Prov. 3:27, 28). For care of orphans, an injunction is to be met with in Deut. 14:29. Sympathy for the poor is enjoined in Deut. 15:11. The injunction to deal gently by mankind is found in Prov. 3:30. The commandment to observe Prayer is given in Deut. 6:13. The injunction for alms-giving may be seen in Exod. 23:10, 11.

The Jews openly disregarded these clear injunctions. They set up equals to God, some believing in Ezra as the son of God, others taking the word of their divines as revelation

and setting aside the dictates of the Holy Writ. Their treatment of their own kinsmen and others was cruel. Their attitude towards orphans and the indigent was unsympathetic. They were quite devoid of fellow-feeling and were lax in Prayers and alms-giving. It should, however, be noted that God has not condemned the whole Jewish nation, but has made an exception in the case of the righteous few among them.

In this verse, as everywhere else in the Quran, the sequence of words follows the natural order of importance. The worship of the one God is mentioned first. Then mention is made of mankind, who have been divided into two classes: (1) those who deserve good treatment as a right; (2) those to whom kindness is shown as an act of charity. The first class is mentioned first, because in their case there is a sort of obligation, a debt to be paid. Those who are to be treated kindly out of charity are mentioned afterwards, the degree of need in each case determining the sequence. Last of all, acts of obedience to God are mentioned; and out of them the most important ones pertaining to the purification of the soul and the payment of religious taxes are selected; and these are placed after fellow-feeling, because fellow-feeling is the first step towards the moral elevation of man, who often feels impelled to it from within without reference to any law.

85. And *remember the time* when We took a covenant from you: 'You shall not shed your blood or turn your people out of your homes'; then you confirmed *it*; and you have been bearing witness to it.⁹¹

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تُشْهَدُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

86. Yet you are the people who slay your own brethren and turn out a section of your people from their homes, backing up one another against them with sin and transgression. And if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, while their very expulsion was unlawful for you. Do you, then, believe in part of the Book and disbelieve in part? There is, therefore, no reward for such among you as do that, except disgrace in the present life; and on the Day of Judgement they shall be driven to a most severe chastisement; and surely Allah is not unmindful of what you do.⁹²

ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدَاوَانِ وَإِنْ يَأْتِوكُمْ أُسْرَى تَفْدُوهُمْ وَهُمْ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

87. These are they who have preferred the present life to the Hereafter. Their punishment shall not therefore be lightened, nor shall they be helped *in any other way*.⁹³

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يَخَفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

It is noteworthy that the injunctions that are found scattered in the Bible have been placed together in a most beautiful order in the Quran.

91. Commentary :

See under 2 : 87.

92. Commentary :

See under 2 : 87.

93. Commentary :

After considering the vices of the Jews in general in the previous verse, the Quran addresses

the Jews of Medina in particular in verses 85 and 86. It is pointed out that in face of the clear injunctions to the contrary, the Jews of Medina had been killing one another and turning one another out of their homes. As explained under 2:18, there lived in Medina in the time of the Holy Prophet three Jewish tribes, the Banū Qainuqā', the Banū Nadīr and the Banū Quraiza; and two pagan tribes, the Aus and the Khazraj. Two of the Jewish tribes, Banū Qainuqā' and Banū Quraiza, sided with the Aus,

- R. 11 88. And verily ^aWe gave Moses the Book and ^bcaused after him Messengers to follow in his footsteps; and to Jesus, son of Mary, ^cWe gave manifest Signs, and strengthened him with ^dthe Spirit of holiness. Will you then, every time a Messenger comes to you with what you yourselves desire not, behave arrogantly and treat some as liars and slay others?⁹⁴

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ
وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ
أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ
فَفَرِّقِيَا كَذِبْتُمْ وَفَرِّقِيَا تَقْتُلُونَ ۝٨٨

^aSee 2 : 54. ^b5 : 47 ; 57 : 28. ^c2 : 254 ; 3 : 185 ; 5 : 111 ; 43 : 64. ^d16 : 103.

and Banū Naḍīr with the Khazraj. Thus, whenever these pagan clans were at war with each other, the Jewish tribes were automatically involved. But, if during a war any Jews were taken prisoner by the pagans, the former would collect money by subscription and ransom them. They considered it improper for a Jew to remain in bondage with a Gentile. The Quran objects to this course by saying that their faith not only forbids the enslavement of Jews, but also prohibits mutual warfare and murder in which they were openly indulging, and there could be nothing worse than to accept a portion of the scriptures and reject the rest; for, when one accepts a portion of the scriptures, it is proof of the fact that one is convinced of their truth. Thus rejection of a portion is clear evidence of a perverted mind. As regards the prohibition of the enslavement of Jews, the reader is referred to Lev. 25 : 39—43, 47—49, 54, 55; Neh. 5 : 8; and the Enc. Bib. iv, 4657. In accordance with these injunctions, the Jews of Medina used to have Jewish slaves redeemed, but it was absurd on their part to do so, because they themselves created the circumstances which led to their enslavement.

Verse 87 points to the fact that the Jews who opposed the Holy Prophet had entirely become worldly-minded, forgetting all about the next life. So they deserved no mercy, and there being no extenuating circumstances,

their punishment would not be lightened.

94. Important Words :

قَفَّيْنَا (We caused to follow) is derived from قَفَّى (We caused to follow) which means, the back of the neck. Hence قَفَّى قَفَا means, he followed him. قَفَّى (qaffā) means, he made a person or thing follow or come after another (Aqrab).

بَيِّنَاتٍ (manifest Signs) is derived from بَيَّنَّ meaning, he explained a thing so as to make it clear or manifest. So بَيِّنَاتٍ means, such signs and arguments as make a thing manifest and clearly establish the truth of a claimant (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

رُوحِ الْقُدُسِ (Spirit of holiness) is a compound word made up of رُوح and الْقُدُس. The first-mentioned word i.e. رُوح means, a spirit, an angel, a word of God; and قُدُس means, sanctity, holiness. رُوحِ الْقُدُسِ would thus mean, the holy or blessed word of God; the spirit or angel of holiness (Aqrab & Lane). It is generally taken to signify the angel Gabriel.

Commentary :

In this verse, the Israelites are told that they had opposed all the Prophets of God, beginning from Moses and ending with Jesus, for no other reason than that some of the teachings of these Prophets were at variance with their cherished desires.

The verse, while speaking generally of the Prophets who came after Moses, makes a special mention of Jesus. The reason for this

lies in the fact that, somehow or other, the Jews accepted all those Prophets who appeared prior to Jesus, but they stubbornly refused to accept him. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that particular mention should have been made of Jesus, and it should have been declared that he was as good and as holy a Prophet as so many others who had gone before him and in whom the Jews had believed, inasmuch as he possessed, in common with them, that characteristic Spirit of holiness which distinguished God's Prophets from other men of the world. The most powerful proof of the truth of the claims of Jesus as a Prophet was his being favoured with Signs and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and this is the very proof on the basis of which the Jews had believed in the previous Prophets. The *بينات* (manifest Signs) and *روح القدس* (the Spirit of holiness) have been mentioned here not because they were the special characteristics of Jesus, but because both these evidences which must accompany every true Prophet were denied him by the Jews. From Matt. 12: 38-40, it is apparent that the Jews denied that Jesus showed any Sign, while from Luke 11: 15 and Matt. 10: 25 we learn that, according to the Jews, Jesus, far from being favoured with the Holy Spirit, was influenced by the Evil Spirit and was (God forbid!) himself a devil.

That *بينات* (manifest Signs) and *روح القدس* (the Spirit of holiness) are the common characteristics of all the Prophets of God and not an exclusive distinction of Jesus is apparent from other verses of the Quran as well. Says the Quran: *That was because their Messengers came to them with بينات (manifest Signs) but they disbelieved; so Allah seized them. Surely, He is strong and severe in chastising* (40:23). Also see 2: 100. And elsewhere the Quran says about the Holy Prophet, *Say, the روح القدس (Spirit of holiness) has brought it (the Quran) down from thy Lord with truth that He may strengthen those who believe and as a guidance and glad tidings for*

Muslims (16: 103). The Quran goes still further and declares that the Spirit of holiness descends not only on Prophets but also on true believers (58: 23).

In this connection we have also the testimony of the Holy Prophet who is reported to have said to the poet Hassān, "Reply, O Hassān (to the disbelievers), on behalf of the Prophet of God, and O God, help Thou Hassān with روح القدس i.e. the Spirit of holiness" (Bukhārī & Muslim).

Hassān also declares in a couplet of his that روح القدس i.e. the Holy Spirit was always with the Muslims. Says he:

و جبريل رسول الله فينا
و روح القدس ليس له كفاء

"And Gabriel, the Messenger of God, is among us and the Spirit of holiness has no match" (Muslim).

From the above it is clear that *البيانات* (manifest Signs) and *روح القدس* (the Spirit of holiness) are not the exclusive privileges of Jesus but were vouchsafed to all the Prophets of God. Even holy men other than Prophets have received the Spirit of holiness from God. The specific mention of "manifest Signs" and "the Spirit of holiness" in this verse is thus meant only to bring home to the Jews that the rejection of Jesus was entirely unjustified.

It is commonly believed that *روح القدس* is another name of the angel Gabriel (Jarīr & Kathīr). As explained under 2: 31, out of His infinite wisdom, God has appointed different angels to execute His will and manifest His attributes in the universe; and the angel to whom the work of bringing about purification in the world and of reflecting God's attribute of holiness has been assigned is called *روح القدس*. The expression "Holy Spirit" is also met with in the Old Testament (Ps. 51: 11). Some Commentators have also interpreted *روح القدس* as a special manifestation of God's اسم اعظم i.e. His chief attribute of Holiness (Kathīr).

89. They said, "Our hearts are wrapped in covers." Nay, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief. Little is that which they believe.⁹⁵

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۚ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

^a4:156; 41:6.

95. Important Words :

اغلف (wrapped in covers) is the plural of غلف which means a thing wrapped in a covering. غلاف means a covering. The word اغلف has also come to mean, one who is uncircumcised, i.e., one whose foreskin, which is also like a covering, is not removed. On the same basis قلب اغلف has come to mean, a heart which is wrapped in a covering; a heart that does not understand anything (Aqrab). The word also signifies, a heart which is a storehouse (lit. bag) of knowledge (Mufradāt).

لعنهم (cursed them). لعنه means: (1) he drove him away and removed him from all good; (2) he humiliated him and expressed an evil opinion about him; (3) he cursed him (Aqrab). اللعن which is the infinitive from لعن gives the sense of driving away a person and putting him at a distance from oneself by way of anger and displeasure. When used by God it means: (1) deprivation of His mercy; and (2) infliction of punishment (Mufradāt). The word is not here used by way of abuse but as expressing an actual state or condition.

Commentary :

The clause, قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ can be interpreted here in all the different senses given above. Whenever the Jews found themselves unable to refute Quranic arguments, they ironically said that they were men of poor intelligence and unable to comprehend Islamic doctrines, and that Muslims should, therefore, go to their learned men and explain their tenets to them. Or taking the word غلف to mean "enclosed in coverings" this reply of the Jews would mean that their hearts enjoyed special protection

from their Lord so that they could not be influenced by the preachings of Muslims. Again, taking the word to signify "a storehouse of knowledge," the reply of the Jews would mean that, as they possessed all necessary spiritual knowledge, they did not stand in need of further teaching.

Whatever was the motive of the Jews in saying these words, the Quran says that Islamic doctrines were not only consistent with reason and easy to grasp, but superior to all other teachings, and the reply of the Jews only indicated that they had lost all touch with God and their faith had become corrupt and vitiated.

The clause, *Allah has cursed them for their disbelief*, is intended to point to the truth that Allah's curse comes only as a result of some evil act on man's own part. Allah, being most Merciful, never deprives a man of His mercy, unless and until he shuts upon himself the doors of divine mercy.

The words, *little is that which they believe*, point to yet another great principle. Though the Jews have been declared to be "accursed" in the sight of God and have been adjudged as "disbelievers," yet God does not say that they are altogether deprived of faith. Their faith is indeed imperfect; nay, it is positively evil, containing much more of falsehood than of truth, yet the little faith that they still happen to possess has been expressly acknowledged by God. Compare with this the claim of the Jews themselves when they say, *the Christians stand on nothing* (2:114). The God of Islam would not say that of either the Jews or the Christians.

90. And when there came to them a Book from Allah, "fulfilling that which is with them,—and before that they had prayed for victory over the disbelievers—yet when there came to them^b that which they knew, they rejected it. The curse of Allah be on the disbelievers."⁹⁶

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ
وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۖ
فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى
الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

91. Evil is that for which they have sold their souls: that they should disbelieve in what Allah has revealed, grudging that Allah should send down His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases. So they incurred wrath upon wrath; and there is an humiliating chastisement for the disbelievers."⁹⁷

بِئْسَ مَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ
بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ
عِبَادِهِ ۖ فَبَاءُ وَبِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ
مُّهِينٌ ﴿٩١﴾

^a2:42, 92, 98, 102; 3:82; 4:48; 35:32; 46:13. ^b2:147. ^c3:113; 5:61.

96. Important Words:

يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ (they prayed for victory) is derived from فتح meaning: (1) he opened a thing, or he disclosed a thing; (2) he conquered or gained victory over. The word يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ would, therefore, have two meanings: (1) they disclose; and (2) they ask or pray for victory (Aqrah).

Commentary:

According to the first meaning of يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ the verse would signify that Jews used to disclose to the pagan Arabs the fact that there was foretold in their scriptures the appearance of a Prophet who would spread the truth all over the world. But when that Prophet actually appeared, even those of them who had seen the signs of God fulfilled in his person turned away from him.

Taking the second meaning of the word, the verse would signify that before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the Jews used to pray fervently to God to raise a Prophet who would cause the true faith to triumph over the false

ones (Hishām, i. 150). But when the Prophet for whom they prayed actually came and the ascendancy of truth over falsehood became manifest, they refused to accept him. This naturally brought on their heads the curse of God.

It may be repeated here that the word "curse" is not used in the Quran as abuse but as indicative of the actual state or condition of a person or a people. As explained under the preceding verse, the literal meaning of the word لعنة is "to be driven away from God" and hence all who stand in opposition to God and His Prophets incur لعنة and are spoken of as being under the curse of God, i.e., driven away from God's presence and deprived of His mercy.

97. Important Words:

بَغْيًا (grudging) is derived from بغى. They say بغى الشيء i.e. he wished or desired or sought the thing. بغى الرجل means, the man transgressed or turned away from the truth, or he disobeyed or revolted against a lawful authority.

92. And "when it is said to them, 'Believe in what Allah has sent down', they say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us'; and they disbelieve in what *has been sent down* after that, yet it is the Truth, fulfilling that which is with them. Say: "Why, then, did you attempt to slay the Prophets of Allah before this, if you were believers?"⁹⁸

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُوْمِنُ بِمَا
أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَنَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ
مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ
مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

^a2:171. ^b3:113, 182.

بغى عليه means, he wronged him and continued long in the act (Aqrah). بغى على أخيه means, he envied his brother; he wished that a blessing might become transferred from his brother to himself (Lane). In the text the word has been translated as "grudging" which is the same as "envying."

بَارِئًا (they incurred) is derived from بارأ which means, he returned. بارأ means, he returned with it. بارأ بغضب من الله means, he returned with anger from God, i.e., the anger of God came upon him; he incurred His anger (Aqrah & Lane).

Commentary :

In this verse, we are told that the Jews rejected the Holy Prophet solely because he was of different nationality. The verse means that the Jews upon whom the truth has dawned and who have come to recognize the Quran as the very Book mentioned in their scriptures are, out of sheer pride and obstinacy, impiously rejecting it, little knowing that, by so doing, they are hastening the ruin of their own souls. The truth is that they cannot bear to see a Prophet raised from among any people other than their own. They fail to realize that all alike are the creatures of God and there is no earthly reason why Prophets should appear only from among the Israelites.

The words بَارِئًا بغضب translated here as, *they incurred wrath*, literally mean "they returned with (God's) wrath" which points to the fact

that though God called them to His presence in order to bestow on them His favours, they, instead of receiving favours, returned from His presence loaded with His displeasure and anger.

The words, *wrath upon wrath*, are used to signify that even before the coming of the Holy Prophet the Jews had incurred the anger of God by their rejection of Jesus and other iniquities; so when they rejected the Holy Prophet, they incurred wrath upon wrath, i.e., they added to their previous load of God's anger.

98. Commentary :

The verse means that whenever Islam is presented to Jews, they, far from reflecting over its claims, consider it enough to say that they will believe in what is sent to Israelite Prophets only, and not in the revelation of outsiders, although the revelation they reject on such flimsy grounds fulfils the prophecies contained in their own scriptures about a new Book. Further, it is added that the statement that they would adhere to what was revealed to Israelite Prophets is absurd, seeing that they had opposed even their own Prophets in their time.

This verse also makes it clear what the word مَصَدَّقًا means when followed by the preposition لَمْ. The expression has been used as a proof of the truth of the Quran, and it is therefore clear that it conveys the sense of "fulfilling" and not that of "confirming". It is

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93. And Moses came to you with manifest Signs, then "you took the calf for worship in his absence, and you were transgressors."⁹⁹

94. And *remember the time*^b when We took a covenant from you and raised high above you the Mount, *saying*, 'Hold firmly to what We have given you and hearken'; they said, 'We hear and we disobey'; and their hearts were permeated with *the love* of the calf because of their disbelief. Say, 'Evil is that which your faith enjoins on you, if you have any faith!'¹⁰⁰

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا
مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا
وَأَشْرَيْنَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِئْسَا
يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيْمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾

^a2:52; 4:154; 7:149, 153; 20:98. ^b2:64; 4:155; 7:172.

only the fulfilment of prophecies in the Bible that can serve as evidence of the truth of the Quran. In this connection, see also 2:42.

For the prophecies alluded to in this verse, i.e., the prophecies contained in the Bible about the Quran and the Holy Prophet, the reader is referred to Deut. 18:15—19; Acts 3:19—24; Deut. 33:2; Matt. 21:42—44; Isa. 21:13—17; 28:9—13; chap. 42; 62:2—4; Dan. 7; etc.

For a discussion of the words, *why did you attempt to slay the Prophets*, see under 2:62.

99. Commentary :

See note on 2:55.

100. Important Words :

اشربوا (were permeated with) is derived from اشرب meaning, he drank. اشرب means, he was made to drink. The expression, اشرب في قلبه حب فلان means, the love of such and such a person permeated his heart (Aqrah). The word is so used because love is like alcohol that intoxicates one who partakes of it. The clause, اشربوا في قلوبهم العجل (lit. they were made to drink into their hearts the calf) must really be read as اشربوا في قلوبهم حب العجل (lit. they

were made to drink into their hearts the love of the calf), the word حب (love) being understood before the word عجل (calf).

Commentary :

For an explanation of the expression, *raised high above you the Mount*, see under 2:64.

The words, *they said, We hear and we disobey*, signify that they practically refused to obey God. They did not necessarily use these exact words; for the word قال, as pointed out under 2:31, sometimes conveys the sense not of actual speech but of practical conduct.

Reference to calf-worship in verse 93 is not a mere reiteration of what has been already said in verse 55; the incident has been mentioned here as an illustration of what has been said about the Jews in the previous verse. Their attention is drawn to their conduct in the days of Moses. When Moses was absent from them for a short time only, they took the image of a calf for their idol, although they had witnessed how God had helped Moses and had shown mighty Signs at his hands; and that at a time when they had given a solemn promise not to worship anything beside God. In spite

95. Say, ^a‘If the abode of the Hereafter, with Allah, is solely for you to the exclusion of *all* other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful’.¹⁰¹

96. But ^bnever shall they wish for it, because of what their own hands have sent on before *them*; and Allah knows the wrongdoers well.¹⁰²

97. And thou shalt surely find them, of all people, the most covetous of life, even more than those who set up equals with God. Every one of them wishes that he may be granted a life of a thousand years, but his being granted *such* life ^cshall not keep him away from the punishment; and Allah sees all that they do.¹⁰³

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

وَلَيَجِدَهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاتِهِ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَا يُودُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحِّزِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

^a2:112; 62:7. ^b62:8. ^c62:9.

of that promise, they showed active opposition to the commandments of God by their deeds.

In the concluding portion of the verse, it is pointed out that the Jews professed to believe in what was revealed to them by God, but their belief was of a strange character; for in spite of it, they persisted in their opposition to the Prophets. If this was believing, then their faith was only leading them astray.

101. Commentary:

See under 2:96 below.

102. Commentary:

In verses 95 and 96 Jews are invited to join with Muslims in what is termed a *مباحلة* or prayer-contest. They are called upon to pray to God in the company of Muslims for the death or destruction of the party with which God is displeased on account of its espousal of the cause of falsehood. If Jews are really the favourites of God and Muslims are under His wrath, the latter, as a result of the prayer contest, will surely meet with ruin, and thus it will become clear which of

the two parties is on the side of truth. The only evidence which in this world can prove the truth of any of the conflicting claims regarding the next life made by the different religious systems is that the promises held out about the next life should in part at least begin to fulfil themselves in this very life. If, in such a prayer-contest as the above, God were to show His favour to the Jews, it would furnish a clear proof that His favours would accompany them also in the next life.

The Quran adds that Jews will never venture to accept the challenge, for they are well aware of their actions and the motives that guide them.

For a fuller description of the institution of *Mubāhala* or prayer-contest see under 3:62.

103. Commentary:

The reason why Jews were more attached to the world than pagans is that the latter did not believe in any retribution after death and, therefore, though they loved this world as

98. Say, 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—for he it is who ^ahas caused it to descend on thy heart by the command of Allah, which ^bfulfils that which precedes it, and is a guidance and glad tidings to the believers—¹⁰⁴

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرًا
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

^a26:194, 195. ^bSee 2:90.

the only place for enjoying honour and happiness and entertained no hope about the next, yet with no fear of punishment after death, they were less cringingly attached to the present life than the Jews, who believed in resurrection after death and feared in their hearts that their actions would make them liable to punishment before God.

104. Important Words :

جبريل (Gabriel) is a compound word made up of جبر (جبر) which in Hebrew means a man or a mighty man or a hero, and ايل (إيل) which means God (Hebrew-English Lexicon by William Gesenius, Boston, 1836. Also see Bukhārī, chap. on *Tafsīr*). The latter word occurs in many combinations (e.g. in the word Ishmael in Gen. 16:11 which means "God heareth" or "God has heard"). In Arabic, which is the mother of Hebrew, the word جبر means, mending a broken thing; giving a poor man so liberally as to make him well off; a brave man. The word ايل is either derived from the Arabic word الله (God) or from the root آل, the active participle from which is آت meaning Controller or Ruler i.e. God (Aqrab). Ibn 'Abbās relates that the other name of جبريل is عبدالله i.e. the servant of God (Jarir), which is simply another rendering of the word جبريل. Thus the angel جبريل (Gabriel) is so called because he is the servant of God; he is the strong and brave servant of God; he looks after the repairing or reformation of the universe, he bestows God's bounties on mankind and is a liberal giver.

In Islam جبريل has been described as the chief among the angels (Manthūr) and was therefore selected by God to be the bearer of the Quranic message, the best and the last ^{ثمينة} (Law) to descend from Heaven. Many Commentators consider that جبريل (Gabriel) is synonymous with روح القدس (the Spirit of holiness) spoken of in the Quran and the Hadith. Similarly, Gabriel has been spoken of as روح الامين (the Trusty Spirit) in the Quran (26:194).

Commentary :

The Jews had been invited to believe in the Quran, but they refused to accept it (v. 92 above) on the ground that it was said to have been brought by Gabriel while, according to them, the bearer of divine revelation was Michael, and not Gabriel (Musnad). The function of Gabriel, as we learn from the Bible, is to convey the messages of God to His servants (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; and Luke 1:19, 26. It is strange that Gabriel is mentioned in the Old Testament for the first time in Daniel and not earlier). The Quran, as the verse under comment points out, assigns the same function to Gabriel. But in some later writings of the Jews, he is described as "the angel of fire and thunder" (Enc. Bib. under Gabriel). Such was the idea of the Jews in the days of the Holy Prophet. They looked upon Gabriel as an angel of wars, calamities and hardships (Jarir under 2:98). Muslim historians tell us that this idea had such a firm hold on the minds of the Jews that when they were told that the bearer of the Quranic revelation was Gabriel, they said: جبريل.

99. ^a 'Whoever is an enemy to Allah, and His angels, and His Messengers, and Gabriel, and Michael, then, surely, Allah is an enemy to such disbelievers.'¹⁰⁵

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ
وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ٩٩

^a58:6.

ذلك الذى ينزل بالحرب والقتال والعذاب — عدونا
i.e. "Gabriel is the angel who is associated with war and bloodshed and punishment. He is our enemy." By saying this, they meant that they would not believe in a revelation brought by Gabriel (Musnad). The reason why the Jews bore enmity to Gabriel seems to be that they had fallen on evil days and as, according to them, Gabriel was the angel of war and punishment, therefore they ascribed their misfortunes to him. There is no doubt that the Talmudic traditions and the Targums were the origin of this notion which gained such a firm footing among Jews; otherwise originally the Bible declares Gabriel to be the angel of good tidings and of the divine word. It is evident that with the lapse of time legends and myths grew round the original truth, which was subsequently lost; and the Jews clung fast to their erroneous belief, which stood in the way of their accepting the Quran or, for that matter, any revelation coming through the agency of Gabriel.

The Quran has, in the verse under comment, brought forward four arguments in refutation of the Jewish plea for rejecting the Quran: *Firstly*, that no angel can bring down any revelation unless he receives direct command from God. Hence the angel who brings the revelation, whether he is Gabriel or Michael or any other, is only a vehicle for the divine word; and even if Jewish tradition associates an angel with calamities, it cannot call into question the authority from which his message originates. *Secondly*, that the revelation sent down to the Prophet of Islam is مصدق (in fulfilment) of the previous Books and in it all the prophecies about

the promised Law-giver contained in the earlier scriptures find their fulfilment, which is a clear proof of its divine origin. *Thirdly*, that when it is practically established that the teachings of the Quran are a guidance for mankind, its acceptance becomes binding upon all right-thinking men. *Fourthly*, that the Quran contains teachings which, besides being right, are also بشرى (bearers of glad tidings) to its followers and harbingers of God's mercy and favours. Such revelation should not be rejected simply for the reason that it has been brought down by Gabriel.

105. Important Words:

ميكال (Michael) is the name of another angel who, like Gabriel, is also one of the chief angels. The word has been described as being a combination of words i.e. من كائيل or كائيل which means, who as God? or who is like God? (Geseneus & Jew. Enc.) i.e. there is none like God, the angel Michael having been given this name owing to his being assigned the duty of establishing God's Unity and Oneness in the universe. The Jews looked upon Michael as their favourite angel (Jew. Enc., also Jarir, under verse 2:98, 99). He was the guardian angel of the Israelites (Enc. Brit. under Michael). In Islam Gabriel is believed to be superior to Michael in rank, for whereas Gabriel is known as عبدالله, Michael has been given the name عبيدالله, the word عبيد being diminutive of the word عبد (Jarir, i. 329). In the days of the Holy Prophet, the Jews looked upon Gabriel as the angel of wars, calamities and hardships, whereas they looked upon Michael as the angel of peace and plenty and rain and herbage (Jarir & Kathir).

100. And surely We have sent down to thee manifest Signs, and no one disbelieves in them but the disobedient.¹⁰⁶

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا
الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

101. What! every time they make a covenant, will a party among them throw it aside? Nay, most of them have no faith.¹⁰⁷

أَوْ كَلَّمَا عَهْدًا وَعَهْدًا تَبَدَّلَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ بَلًا
أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

102. And now when there has come to them a Messenger from Allah, fulfilling that which is with them, a party of the people to whom the Book was given have thrown the

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا
مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ
اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

^a3:188. ^bSee 2:90. ^c3:188.

Commentary :

As an insult to a king's agent implies insult to the king himself, so those who say, unworthy things about any of the angels really find fault with God. The Quran, therefore, declares that the words of the Jews referred to in the preceding verse imply irreverence to God and opposition to His will, such as only an enemy of God could show. Angels constitute an important link in the spiritual chain and he who breaks even one link of the spiritual chain or manifests ill-will against any single unit of the spiritual system, in fact severs his connection with the whole system. Such a man deprives himself of the favours and blessings which are bestowed upon the true servants of God and renders himself deserving of the punishment fixed for transgressors.

In this verse a general mention of God, the angels and the Prophets is followed by a specific mention of Gabriel and Michael. The reason is not far to seek. The Jews regarded Gabriel as their enemy. It is therefore particularly pointed out that enmity with Gabriel merits divine punishment. The name of Michael is

also mentioned along with Gabriel's so that no Muslim might take it into his head to retort to Jewish hatred of Gabriel by speaking ill of Michael, the favourite angel of the Jews.

106. Commentary :

The verse purports to say that the denial of the Holy Prophet by the Jews, and for that matter by all other disbelievers, is quite unreasonable because his claim is based on convincing arguments and manifest Signs. The verse gives the lie to those who have the effrontery to assert that, according to the Quran, the Prophet of Islam showed no Signs. The greatest of the Signs shown by the Holy Prophet is the matchlessness of the Quran itself.

The word فاسقون (the disobedient) occurring at the end of this verse means "those who first take upon themselves to observe what the Law orders and acknowledge its authority and then go against it" (Lane). This is a true picture of the Jews who rejected the Holy Prophet in spite of the fact that his coming had been foretold in their own scriptures.

107. Commentary :

See under next verse.

Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they know *it* not.¹⁰⁸

103. And they pursue *the course* which the rebellious *men* followed during the reign of Solomon. And Solomon did not disbelieve; but it was the rebellious ones who disbelieved, teaching people falsehood and deception. And *they pursue* what was revealed to the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt. But these two taught no one until they had said, 'We are but a trial, do not therefore disbelieve.' So men learnt from them that by which they made a difference between man and his wife, but they harmed no one thereby, except by the command of Allah; on the contrary, these people are learning that which would harm them and do them no good. And they have certainly known that he who trafficks therein has no share of *good* in the Hereafter; and surely evil is that for which they have sold their souls; had they but known!¹⁰⁹

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيْطَانُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكٍ سُلَيْمٍ ۖ وَ
مَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمٌ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيْطَانِ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ
النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ
هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّىٰ
يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا
مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ
بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ
وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي
الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ
لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

108. Commentary :

As pointed out in the preceding verse, the Jews had pledged themselves to their own Prophets that they would accept the Prophet who was to appear from among their brethren, the Ishmaelites, in fulfilment of the prophecies mentioned in the Bible. But although all the signs mentioned in the prophecies concerning the promised Prophet had been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet, yet they persisted in their denial and thus broke their promise and belied their own scriptures.

The word *مصدق* has been construed to mean: (1) that the Quran declares the Bible to be true, and (2) that the Quran fulfils the prophecies contained in the Bible. The latter meaning only

is applicable here. For here the People of the Book are spoken of as casting the Book of God (the Torah) behind their backs as a result of the fulfilment of its prophecies in the Quran. This cannot be the case, if we follow the first meaning ascribed to the word; for if the Quran declared the Bible to be true, this could not be the cause of the Jews casting their own Book behind their backs. Evidently, the correct meaning is that in spite of the fact that the Quran fulfils the prophecies contained in the Bible, the Jews reject it, and thereby cast their own Book behind their backs.

109. Important Words :

تتلا (followed). See 2 : 114

شياطين (rebellious men). See 2 : 15.

على (during) gives the sense of في i.e. "in" or "during" (Aqrab & Mughni). It is also used to denote a hostile sense meaning "against," as one says خرج عليه i.e. he rebelled against him, or he went out against him with an army intending to fight (Wright). In this sense the phrase على ملك سامان would mean, against the government of Solomon, or conspiring against his government.

سحر (falsehood and deception). In verbal senses سحره means, he deceived him; he coaxed him and involved him in trouble and deprived him of his understanding; he enchanted him. سحر الفضة means, he coated a piece of silver so as to make it look like gold. The noun سحر means, anything the source of which is not quite visible; showing off falsehood in the form of truth; a crafty device; craftiness; mischief; enchantment (Aqrab). It also means, producing what is false in the form of truth; any event of which the cause is hidden and which is imagined to be different from what it really is; embellishment by falsification and deceit (Lane). Thus every falsehood, deceit or crafty device which is meant to hide the real object from public view is included in the meaning of سحر.

ملاكين (two angels) is the dual number from ملك (angel) for which see 2:31. Figuratively ملك is sometimes used to denote a handsome or holy person, as the Quran says, *He (Joseph) is but a gracious angel i.e. a handsome and pious youth* (12:32). As in the verse under comment, the two angels are described as teaching something to the people, therefore the word cannot be taken in its literal significance, because angels do not live among men and do not generally have free intercourse with them (17:95, 96; 21:8). Thus in the present verse ملاكين would not mean "two angels" in the literal sense of the word but "two holy men."

ماروت (Hārūt) and ماروت (Mārūt) are both descriptive names. ماروت is derived from هرت

which means, he tore up (Aqrab); hence ماروت means, one who tears; the tearer. ماروت is derived from هرت which means, he broke (Aqrab & Lane). Thus ماروت means, one who breaks; the breaker. These names signify that the object of the appearance of these holy men was to 'tear' asunder and 'break' the glory and power of certain people.

فتنة (trial) means, the trial or means whereby the condition of a man may be demonstrated in respect of good or evil (Lane). They say قطن الصانع الذهب i.e. the goldsmith melted the gold in the crucible so that its purity or impurity might be ascertained (Aqrab).

Commentary :

Many a legend unwarranted by the Quran and the Hadith and even running counter to them clusters round this verse. It would be quite unreasonable to interpret it on the basis of those myths. For right interpretation no external evidence is needed, the words being self-explanatory. It is clear from the verse itself that Jews in the time of the Holy Prophet were bent upon the same mischief which characterized them in the days of Solomon and during the days of their captivity in Babylon. The verse further indicates that the mischief-mongers of Solomon's time were those "rebellious men" who called him an unbeliever. God says that those wicked men themselves, and not Solomon, lacked belief. Again, the verse tells us that these men taught their associates such signs as conveyed to them meanings quite different from those generally accepted, for the purpose of deceiving other people and concealing their own activities. All this leads to the conclusion that this verse alludes to those secret plots which the enemies of Solomon made against him, and by which they wished to break his empire. It is pointed out that now in the time of the Holy Prophet these people are resorting to the self-same tactics, but that they will fail.

As the verse refers to a number of historical events, it is advisable to relate them here at some length.

When Jews saw that the power of Islam was steadily expanding and that no opposition from the Arabs had been able to arrest the progress of Muslims, they began to excite outsiders against them. At that time there were two large empires in the neighbourhood of Arabia : (1) The Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire ; and (2) The Persian Empire. As Jews were already at enmity with the Roman Government, because they were in constant trouble under it, so it was only the Persian Government to which they could look for support. Harassed by the oppression of Christian rulers, they had taken refuge in Persia, where they enjoyed a good deal of religious freedom, and their religious centre shifted from Judah and Jerusalem to Babylonia (Hutchinson's History of the Nations, p. 550). In the seventh century of the Christian era, *i.e.*, during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, Jews suffered exceptionally cruel persecution at the hands of the Christian Emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire. "Both Phocas and Heraclius", says the Historians' History of the World (vol. 7, p. 175), "attempted to exterminate the Jewish religion, and if possible to put an end to their national existence. Heraclius not only practised every species of cruelty himself to effect this object within the bounds of his own dominions, but he even made the forced conversion or banishment of the Jews a prominent feature in his diplomacy." So, in the time of the Holy Prophet the only government to which the Jews could look for help was that of Persia, where their co-religionists enjoyed much influence, especially in the reign of Chosroes II (Jew. Enc., ix. 648).

Consequently, when the Jews saw that their efforts to check the progress of Islam

had totally failed, they took to exciting the Persian Court against the Holy Prophet by various means ; and as a result, Chosroes II issued orders to the Governor of Yemen to send to him the Arabian claimant as a captive. But when the envoys of the Governor came to the Holy Prophet, he asked them to see him the next day, when he told them that God had informed him that He had had their king murdered. Thereupon they returned and related this incident to the Governor. A few days later, the Governor received a letter from Siroes, the son of Chosroes II, to the effect that he had killed his father on account of the latter's tyranny and that the Governor should, on his behalf, renew the oath of allegiance from all the Chiefs of Yemen ; and that the order of his father regarding an Arab should be considered as cancelled (*Tabarī*, iii. 1573—1574).

Some historians, including *Ṭabarī* himself, hold that it was the letter of the Holy Prophet to the king of Persia inviting him to Islam that was the occasion of his orders for the apprehension of the Holy Prophet. But on comparison of the dates of the above-mentioned events, this turns out to be a mistaken view. For, as we read in *Zurqānī* (ii. 211-212), the letter in question was despatched from Medina on the first of Muḥarram, 7 A.H.—a date corresponding to 12th April, 628 A.D. (Lane under *هجرة*) ; whereas Chosroes II, who sent orders for the arrest of the Holy Prophet, had been assassinated on the 29th of February, 628 A.D. (Historians' History of the World, viii. 95). Thus the view that the letter of the Holy Prophet was the cause of Chosroes' orders is quite untenable ; and the only possible cause of Chosroes' ignominious orders was that his ears had been poisoned by malicious reports, a fact admitted by Sir William Muir (Life of Mohammad, p. 370). It is to these efforts of the Jews that the Quran alludes in the verse under comment.

The verse also points out that it was foolish on the part of the Jews to suppose that they would succeed in that way. Their attention is invited to the fact that they had already been responsible for two secret plots. The first was against Solomon, when some members of their community turned rebels, hatched plots and stirred up bitter feeling against him by calling him an infidel; whereas the infidels were those who opposed him, hurled imputations at him, and set up against him secret societies in which secret signs and symbols were taught. The Jews, however, themselves reaped the ill-reward of their sinister schemes: their power, as a consequence, fell into decay, and at last they became so powerless that they were driven into exile towards Babylon. This account of Jewish secret societies and conspiracies and treacherous signs and symbols, as alluded to in this verse, finds corroboration in the Bible (I Kings, 11:1-6), where we read that the charge of idol-worship was spread against Solomon. An account of his enemies is found in I Kings 11:14, 23, 26, and a reference to secret plots is met with in II Chron. 10:2-4 where we learn that the Jews had sent for Jeroboam, a bitter enemy of Solomon, immediately after his death and had attempted to make Solomon's son agree to some demands of theirs, involving certain imputations against Solomon, before his accession to the throne. We learn about the secret signs from I Kings 11:29-32, in which the ten tribes of the Israelites are likened to ten pieces of a garment, and Jeroboam is told that these ten tribes were on his side against Solomon; and so it proved to be, for on the death of Solomon, these ten tribes made Jeroboam their king (I Kings 12:20). Again, the reference of the Quran to the infidelity of Solomon's enemies finds corroboration in II Chron. 11:15, from which we learn that his enemies, who falsely charged him with unbelief, themselves fell into idol-worship when they rose to power.

Besides the testimony of the Bible, there is other evidence to show that in the days of Solomon a secret society was at work against him. An old tradition, current among medieval Freemasons, indicates that Solomon was envious of the superior intelligence of Hiram, the chief architect who built the Temple at Jerusalem. He is said to have attempted to kill the great Mason by having him thrown into a tank of molten brass, but he was saved by the spirit of his ancestor, Cain, who prophesied that at last his people would get the better of their enemy. Solomon, however, as the tradition goes, had him afterwards put to death. It is said of him that he had fixed certain secret signs which were a sort of mystery known only to him and his associates (Secret Societies of the World, Volume II, pp. 1-8; as the original book could not be obtained, the reference is to an Urdu translation). We further learn from this book that before the period of the Accepted Masons, the same signs used in all the Lodges were current among the Masons of Solomon's time (p. 11) and that at the time of initiation, the Hiram incident was related to the new member (pp. 29, 30). However incredible the story as a whole may be, it points at least to the conclusion that in one way or other, secret societies were associated with Solomon's reign and were much in vogue in his time.

The second occasion when, according to the Quran, the Israelites had resort to secret societies was during their captivity in Babylon. But this time they were not acting against any Prophet but were, on the other hand, working under the leadership of two inspired personages, who were, in obedience to divine command, trying to bring about the deliverance of the Israelites. Their mission was to "tear asunder" and "break down" the empire of the enemies of the Israelites. These holy men told new members, at the time of initiation, that they were a sort of trial from God, serving to

104. And ^aif they had believed and acted righteously, better surely would have been the reward from Allah, had they but known!¹¹⁰

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوُا الْمَثُوبَةَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّوْكَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

^a3:180; 5:66, 67.

differentiate between the good and the bad, and that the Israelites should not therefore refuse to believe what they said, because this would lead them to infidelity. In their teachings they drew a distinction between males and females, confining membership to males only (this is an old practice found among most secret societies). It is also stated that the disciples of these holy men directed their activities against only those for whose chastisement they were commissioned by God.

In this narration, the Quran refers to the days when King Nebuchadnezzar brought the Jews as captives into Babylon and kept them there for a long time. The holy men referred to in the verse under comment were Haggai, the Prophet, and Zechariah, the son of Iddo (Ezra 5:1). When Cyrus, King of Media and Persia, rose to power, the Israelites entered into a secret agreement with him and greatly facilitated his conquest of Babylon. In return for this service, he not only allowed them to return to their own country but also helped in the rebuilding of the Temple (Historians' History of the World, ii. 126).

After stating that the Jews of the Holy Prophet's time were following the same course which was adopted by the rebels of Solomon's days and which was later adopted by the Jews under two holy men in Babylon, it was necessary here to state the ultimate upshot of their efforts against the Holy Prophet, because on the two previous occasions their efforts had met with different results. On the first occasion the conspiracy of the Israelites, being directed

against a Prophet of God, had ended in the total loss of their prestige and finally in their banishment to Babylon. On the second occasion, they took a similar course under two inspired personages and were successful. Hence, in order to indicate whether the efforts of the Jews against the Holy Prophet would meet with failure, as they did in the days of Solomon, or with success as in Babylon, the Quran says: *these people are learning that which would harm them and do them no good*; hinting that they will not be successful as in Babylon. Accordingly, the consequence of their hostile efforts against the Holy Prophet was that Chosroes, their only supporter, met his death at the hands of his son, and they themselves were exiled from Arabia in the time of 'Umar. In the concluding portion of the verse, God adds: *And they have certainly known that he who trafficks therein has no share of good in the Hereafter*, meaning that a mischievous plotter never succeeds ultimately. The last clause, *had they but known*, throws a flood of light on how intensely God desires that His creatures should always take the right course and not be misled by mischievous people.

110. Important Words:

مَثُوبَةٌ (reward) is, like ثَوَابٌ (with which it is synonymous), derived from تَابَ which means, he returned, or he returned to a good condition. ثَوَابٌ and مَثُوبَةٌ mean, requital or reward of good or bad deeds. Generally, they are used in the sense of a reward of good deeds (Aqrab).

105. O ye who believe, "say not, 'Rā'inā', but say, 'Unẓurnā' and hearken. And for the disbelievers is a painful punishment."¹¹¹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انْظُرْنَا
وَأَسْمِعُوا وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾

44 : 47.

Commentary :

If the Jews had possessed true faith in God and had acted in His fear, they would not have devoted all their energies to the acquisition of worldly gains but would have sought the good of the Hereafter. They have, however, been seeking the advantage of the present life only and have neglected the Hereafter altogether, which shows that they are utterly lacking in true faith and are not leading righteous lives.

111. Important Words :

راعا (*rā'inā*) is derived from رعى meaning, he watched or looked on. راعه means, he looked towards him with goodly feeling or he had regard for him. راع امرء means, he watched his affair. راعنى سمع means, lend me your ear or listen to what I say. راع النجوم means, he watched the stars and waited for their setting (Aqrab). So راعا would mean, look to us or have a regard for us. Or the word is derived from the root رعن i.e. he acted foolishly in which case راعن would mean, a fool; a conceited person; a proud man (Aqrab).

انظرا (*unẓurnā*) is derived from نظر meaning, he looked, or he saw, or he had regard for. So انظرا would mean, look to us or have regard for us. Both these words i.e. راعا and انظرا are used by a listener when he cannot follow the speech of a speaker. They roughly give the sense of, "I request you to repeat what you have said" or, to give a commoner idiom, "I beg your pardon"; or they are used on similar other occasions when one desires to draw the attention of a person towards oneself.

Commentary :

After mentioning the intrigues which the Jews carried on with outsiders to ruin the mission of the Holy Prophet, the Quran proceeds to illustrate such of their machinations as they resorted to in order to belittle the Holy Prophet and sow dissension and discord among Muslims. An apparently minor illustration is selected to emphasize the fact that where the spirit of a people is concerned, sometimes very small things bring about dangerous results, inasmuch as they help to undermine the spirit of discipline and respect for authority. It is hinted that the Jews were in the habit of devising plans to detract from the due respect with which the minds of the Muslims were inspired towards the Holy Prophet. One of these mean attempts was to address such words to the Holy Prophet as were not quite in harmony with a spirit of discipline and respect; or bore a twofold sense, one good and the other bad. Some Muslims, in innocent imitation of the Jews and in ignorance of the latter's real motive, sometimes began to imitate their language.

One of the words used by the Jews was راعا (*rā'inā*) which, as explained under Important Words, means, have regard for us. But as the word راعا belongs to the measure of راعاة which generally gives the idea of reciprocity denoting two parties standing almost on the same level, it may mean, have regard for us that we may have regard for you. As this expression involved disrespect to the Holy Prophet, God forbids Muslims to use such words, and advises them to use language which

106. They who disbelieve from among the People of the Book, or from among those who associate gods with Allah, desire not that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord; but "Allah chooses for His mercy whomsoever He pleases; and Allah is of exceeding bounty."¹¹²

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الشَّارِكِينَ
أَنْ يُنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ
بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

107. "Whatever Sign We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Dost thou not know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills?"¹¹³

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ
مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

^a3 : 75. ^b16 : 102.

is perfectly respectful and unequivocal. He exhorts them to say راعنا instead of راعنا because the former expression, though having a similar meaning, conveys no bad sense. God further enjoins Muslims to listen to the Holy Prophet attentively, so that they may not need such words at all.

The word راعنا which the Muslims were forbidden to use can, as pointed out above, also be traced to the root راعن which means, a fool or a conceited person. When used in addressing a person, it takes the form of راعنا which may mean, "O fool" or "O conceited person."

The Jews, utterly depraved in mentality, resorted to these mean practices with a view to belittling the position of the Holy Prophet and undermining the spirit of respect in which he was held by his followers. The Quran has mentioned this incident with a twofold purpose; *firstly*, to expose the Jews and to bring home to them their mean and mischievous intentions; *secondly*, to teach the Muslims a lesson of respect and caution. For the testimony of the Hadith to such incidents see Jarir and Manthur under 2 : 105.

112. Commentary :

The People of the Book and the pagan tribes of Arabia grudged the favours which were being bestowed by God on Muslims. In reply to this, God says that He, being the Lord and Master of the entire Universe, could not for ever bind Himself to one people but chose for His bounty whomsoever He pleased from among His creation. But now when He has chosen the Muslims, He is not confining His favours to one people only. The mission of the Holy Prophet being for all mankind, the call to come and receive God's favours is universal and hence no people need now show envy or grudge. With the advent of Islam the era of الفضل العظيم i.e. "exceeding (viz. universal) bounty" had dawned.

113. Important Words :

نسخ (We abrogate) is derived from نسخ which has two meanings: (1) he abrogated or annulled, irrespective of the fact whether he brought another in its place or not; (2) he prepared a true copy of a book (Aqrab). It is from the latter sense that the word نسخة or "copy" is derived. From the former sense we derive the words نسخ i.e. the thing which comes to

abrogate another, and منسوخ i.e. the thing which is abrogated.

نسها (We cause to be forgotten) is derived from نسي meaning, he forgot, or he failed to preserve in his mind. انسى is the causative form of نسي meaning, he made a person forget a thing (Aqrah).

مثل (like) has three distinct uses: (1) either it is used to denote the like of a thing; (2) or it is used to denote a thing itself; (3) or sometimes it is redundant, giving no special meaning (Aqrah & Miqbāh).

Commentary :

Some Commentators have attempted to infer from this verse that some of the verses of the Quran have been abrogated by others. But this conclusion is grievously erroneous and unwarranted. There is nothing in this verse to indicate that the word آية (Sign) occurring here refers to the Quranic verses. Both in the preceding and the following verses, a reference is made to the People of the Book and their jealousies for the new revelation, which clearly shows that the word آية spoken of in this verse as being abrogated, refers to the previous revelation. It is pointed out in this verse that the previous scriptures contained two kinds of commandments. *Firstly*, those which, owing to the changed conditions of the world and the universality of the new revelation, required abrogation; *secondly*, those containing eternal truths which did not require abrogation but simply resuscitation so that people might be reminded of the forgotten truth. It was, therefore, necessary (1) to abrogate certain portions and bring in their place new ones, and (2) to restore the lost ones. So, God abrogated some portions of the old Books, replacing them with new and better ones, and at the same time He re-introduced the missing portions by similar ones. This is the only meaning which is consistent with the context and the general spirit of Quranic teaching. In the verse the word نسخ (We abrogate) relates to

the words بخير (one better) and the words نسها (cause to be forgotten) relate to the words علها (the like thereof) meaning that when God abrogates a certain thing He brings a better thing in its place and when He causes a thing to be forgotten, i.e., when people forget a thing, He brings it over again i.e. He resuscitates it.

The Jews themselves admit that after the Israelites were carried as captives to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the whole of the Pentateuch was lost (Enc. Bib, 653-654).

The meaning put on the verse by some Translators, viz., that certain verses of the Quran stand abrogated is not only opposed to the words of the Quran and the context of the verse, but is also against reason; nor can any authentic saying of the Holy Prophet be quoted in its favour. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the whole of the Quran must be strictly followed and he himself acted upon all its teachings throughout his life. Besides this, the Quran itself testifies to its own purity and integrity. The well-known verse: *Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation and most surely We will be its guardian* (15 : 10) leads to no other conclusion. If the abrogation of any part of the Quran be conceded, the promise about its protection becomes null and void, for in that case it would be impossible to distinguish the abrogated portions from the rest of the Book.

Again, there is absolutely no self-contradiction in the Quran, and therefore there is no need of resorting to the theory of abrogation. So-called contradictions only betray lack of deep study on the part of those who proclaim them. When one fails to understand two verses in their true relations, one is inclined to see a contradiction between them and then takes recourse to the convenient theory that one of the two verses must have been abrogated by the other. As soon as they appear to be reconcilable, the abrogation theory becomes gratuitous. This is why those who have upheld the abrogation

108. Dost thou not know that "the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah alone? And there is no protector or helper for you beside Allah."¹¹⁴

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ط وَ
مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ۝

3: 190; 5: 41; 7: 159; 9: 116; 43: 86; 57: 6.

theory have gradually been compelled to reduce the number of abrogated verses; for whereas the abrogated verses were formerly thought to be as many as 500, they have, by later scholars, been gradually reduced to only five. But even this is incorrect; for there is absolutely no verse in the Quran which is abrogated and we challenge any critic to come forward and prove that any verse of the Holy Book is abrogated. It is a pity that such beautiful significance of the verse under comment should have, as has been briefly portrayed above, become marred through ignorance and thoughtlessness.

The verse has a reference to yet another significance as well. The People of the Book have been told that the Quran has come to abrogate all previous scriptures; for, in view of the changed conditions of mankind, it has brought a new *شريعة* (Law) which is not only better than all the old codes of Law, but is also meant for all men and all times. An inferior thing with a limited mission must give place to a superior thing with a universal mission. Having explained this point, the Quran proceeds to say that although its teachings are meant for all time, yet a period is destined to come in the life of Islam when, though the letter of the Quran would still be intact, its spirit would be forgotten and lost by Muslims. When such a time comes, God will arrange to resuscitate the Quranic teachings, i.e., bring back "the like thereof" by raising a special Reformer from among Muslims. This prophecy is referred to more pointedly in 62: 4 where God promises to raise a Reformer in

the likeness of the Holy Prophet in the Latter Days. This Reformer, it is pointed out, would bring back the true faith to the world, even if it had soared away as high as the Pleiades (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*). The prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

114. Important Words:

ولى (protector). They say *ولى الرجل* i.e. he helped him; or he made friends with him. *ولى البلد* means, he got control or authority over the town. So *ولى* means: (1) friend; (2) helper; (3) protector; (4) ally, etc. (Aqrah).

Commentary:

In this verse an argument has been brought forth in support of the fact that Quranic revelation abrogates the previous revelations. God says that to Him belongs the entire universe, the heavens and the earth, and it was in the fitness of things that finally a revelation meant for the whole of mankind should have made its appearance.

In the verse, the Jews are also told that it will be to their own interest to embrace Islam; for otherwise they will have neither friend nor helper against Allah.

There is a subtle implication in the verse, viz., that the Muslims, though despised and persecuted today, will not only receive spiritual favours from God, but will also become masters of large earthly kingdoms as well; for is not Allah the controller of the heavens and the earth?

109. "Would you question the Messenger sent to you as Moses was questioned before this? And whoever takes disbelief in exchange for belief has undoubtedly gone astray from the right path."¹¹⁵

أَمْ تَرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَى مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ①

110. Many of the People of the Book wish out of sheer envy from their own selves, that, after you have believed, they could turn you again into disbelievers after the truth has become manifest to them. But 'forgive and turn away from them, till Allah brings His decree. Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills."¹¹⁶

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّوكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا ۖ حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۖ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا ۚ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ②

^a4 : 154. ^b3 : 101, 150 ; 4 : 90. ^c5 : 14. ^d5 : 53 ; 16 : 34.

115. Important Words :

سواء (right) is derived from سَوَّى. They say سَوَّى سَوَى الرَّجُلِ i.e. his affairs became straight and well. سواء means: (1) the central portion of a thing ; (2) equal. سواء السبيل means, the straight or right portion of a way ; or a straight or right way (Lisân & Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse mentions another artifice which the Jews employed to overthrow the mission of the Holy Prophet. They asked him absurd and silly questions as had no bearing on religion. This they did to inoculate Muslims with the same spirit of stupid questioning, so that their hearts might gradually become estranged from the dignity of faith and give way to doubt. In warning Muslims against such a course, the Quran points out that the Jews had ruined themselves by putting similar questions to Moses, and that the Muslims should, therefore, beware of following their evil example. In fact, unnecessary and irrelevant questions in religious

matters eventually lead one to loss of faith, for they tend to degrade religion to a plaything or a piece of idle philosophy.

As to the nature of questions put to Moses by the Israelites, the Quran refers to one in 4 : 154. Says God : *The People of the Book ask thee to cause a Book to descend on them from heaven. They asked Moses a greater thing than this ; they said, 'Show us Allah openly.'* Then a destructive punishment overtook them because of their transgression. Then they took the calf for worship after clear Signs had come to them, but We pardoned even that. And We gave Moses manifest authority. This verse gives us an indication as to the nature of the questions that were put to Moses, and Muslims are forbidden to put such questions to their Prophet.

116. Important Words :

عفا (forgive) is derived from عَفَا. They say عَفَا عَنْ ذَنْبِهِ or عَفَا عَنْهُ or عَفَا عَنْهُ meaning, he forgave and pardoned him and did not resort to punishment ; he connived at his fault

111. And ^aobserve Prayer and pay the Zakât; and ^bwhatever good you send on before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely, Allah sees all that you do.¹¹⁷

وَاقْبِلُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ
مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

بَصِيرٌ ③

^aSee 2 : 4. ^b73 : 21.

or offence. عفا الله عنه means, God obliterated the traces of his sin. عفا عن الشيء means, he withheld or restrained himself from it (Aqrab).

اصفحوا (turn away) is derived from صفع. They say صفع عنه meaning, he turned his face from it, he avoided it and left it alone; he pardoned him his sin. الصفع means, the side of a thing; or the side of a face i.e. the cheek, etc. (Aqrab).

امر (decree). The verb امر means, he commanded or he enjoined or he asked. So امر means, a command; an order; a decree; a judgement; an affair; a thing; a condition or state; an event. امر الله means, the promised or the decreed punishment of God (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

By manifold devices, some of which have been referred to above, the Jews wished to lead the Muslims astray, and their designs had their basis in jealousy. Muslims are exhorted not to quarrel with them but to wait patiently in a spirit of forbearance, till God Himself should finally decide the matter.

As explained under Important Words above, there is a subtle distinction between the meanings of عفو (forgive) and صفع (turn away). Whereas the former means, abstaining from punishment, the latter signifies, turning one's face away or leaving a thing alone. By using the words together, God exhorts Muslims not only to forgive the Jews and refrain from punishing them for their overt hostile acts and covert machinations, but to leave them alone

and remain aloof from them till God Himself opened out a way for them, which He eventually did, as soon afterwards the Jews themselves declared war against the Muslims.

It is wrong to think that the words, *till Allah brings His decree*, refer to aggressive war. It is God's general decree or judgement that is meant here, as may be inferred from the words that follow, viz., *surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills*. Some of the Jews embraced Islam and the rest perished as a result of divine punishment.

The phrase, *out of envy from themselves*, means that the Holy Prophet had done nothing to excite their jealousy, but that it was their own evil nature that had given rise to it. The disease of حسد (jealousy) originated in their own hearts and had no infection from outside.

117. Commentary :

When one is subjected to continued persecution, one is apt to lose patience. But Muslims were enjoined meekly to endure troubles and torments, and in order to be able to do so, they were ordered to resort to الصلاة (prayers to God) on the one hand, and to الزكوة (helping mankind) on the other. By so doing, they would acquire from God the power to endure.

The words, *whatever good you send on before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah*, contain a deep spiritual truth. Whatever good man does is kept in store for him by Allah and nothing is lost. Every good work is like

112. And they say, "None shall ever enter Heaven unless he be a Jew or a Christian." These are their vain desires. Say, 'Produce your proof, if you are truthful.' ¹¹²

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ
نَصْرًا تِلْكَ أَمَاتُهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

2 : 95 ; 62 : 7.

a seed which may lie hidden from the public view but is all the time a large tree in the making. So the Muslims should not think that their Prayers and their *Zakāt* will be lost. They are sure to bring forth good fruit sooner or later.

118. Important Words :

هود (the Jews) has by some been looked upon as the plural of هاد which is active participle from هاد meaning, he repented and turned towards the truth or towards God. In this sense هود would mean, a people who have turned to God with repentance. The word هود is a proper name for the Jews. The original and commoner word, however, is اليهود or يهود from which, according to some, the letter ي has been dropped, leaving the word هود (Aqrab). See also 2 : 63.

Commentary :

So far Christians were not separately addressed. But now the Quran mentions them along with the Jews, indicating that their case was no better than that of the latter, both being under the delusion that one could obtain salvation merely by becoming a Jew or a Christian. They forgot the fact that when God had established a fresh covenant, salvation could not be possible without conforming thereto. If, however, the Jews and the Christians were justified in their claims, they should advance some reasons or scriptural evidence to show that it was enough for the purposes of salvation to join their folds. And they could not do it, because in their scriptures

themselves there was foretold the appearance of a Prophet whom it was enjoined upon them to accept and whose rejection was stated to lead to estrangement from God.

Christianity, as well as Judaism, was meant for the guidance of the Israelites alone. The mission of Jesus was not meant for the whole world (Matt. 7 : 6 ; 10 : 6 ; 15 : 24 ; Mark 7 : 27). Though later on the followers of Jesus violated the limit imposed upon his mission and claimed universality for it, yet the hard fact remains that he was sent only for the Israelites, and his mission was to uplift that people alone. As other nations of the world are also the creation of God, it is therefore only right to believe that God must have made some arrangement for their guidance as well. Hence, it is quite unreasonable on the part of the Jews and Christians to hold that the door of salvation was closed against the followers of other faiths. Such a view would mean that God had confined salvation to certain tribes, to the exclusion of others, which is evidently absurd.

Islam, however, is not exposed to that objection. In the first place, it is not a tribal faith, but is universal in character. In the Quran God enjoins the Holy Prophet to Say, *O mankind ! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah* (7 : 159). Similarly, there is a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect, "I have been sent for the whole mankind while the Prophets before me were sent to particular peoples only" (Musnad).

Secondly, unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam does not hold Hell to be everlasting,

113. Nay, "whoever submits himself completely to Allah, and is the doer of good, shall have his reward with his Lord. ^bNo fear shall come upon such, neither shall they grieve.¹¹⁹

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ١١٩

^a4 : 126. ^bSee 2 : 63.

but a place of reformation, where sinners will be purged of their sins to enable them to find their way ultimately to Heaven and enjoy the reward of whatever good deeds they had done in this world. On the other hand, Islam looks upon the bounties of Heaven to be everlasting. With Jews and Christians, it is only the wish that has been father to the thought and nothing else. *Produce your proof, if you are truthful*, says the Quran.

119. Important Words :

نَـيْ (nay) is used for تَصَدِيقٌ (confirmation) and generally follows a question. It must be followed by a clause in the affirmative, whether the question which it follows is in the negative or affirmative. Thus in English it may either be rendered as yes or nay, as the case may be, but not as no (Aqrab & Lane).

اسْلَمَ (submits) is derived from سَلِمَ which means, he was or became safe and secure, or he escaped. سَلِمَ مِنَ الْعَيْبِ وَالْآفَةِ means, he became safe or free from defect and evil. اسْلَمَ which is both transitive and intransitive means : (1) he embraced Islam; (2) he resigned or submitted himself; (3) he paid in advance. اسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ means, he submitted or resigned himself wholly to God, or he devoted his entire attention to God, or he resigned himself to God (Lane & Aqrab).

وَجْهَهُ (himself). وَجْهٌ means : (1) face; (2) the part of a thing visible to the sight of a looker on; (3) the thing itself; (4) direction; (5) object and motive; (6) deed or action to which a man directs his attention; (7) the desired way; (8) favour or countenance as in قُلْ ذَلِكَ لَوْجُهُ اللَّهِ

i.e. he did it to obtain the favour or countenance of God (Aqrab).

مُحْسِنٌ (doer of good) is derived from حَسَنَ meaning, he or it became good or beautiful. احْسَنَ اِلَيْهِ means, he did good to, or bestowed a favour on him. احْسَنَ الشَّيْءُ means, he rendered the thing good or beautiful. احْسَانٌ means, the doing of good; act of goodness; sincerity. الْحَسَنَى (feminine of الْحَسَنَ) means : (1) success or victory; (2) best thing; (3) the view or vision of God; to see God (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

The verse is important and explains a fundamental truth. In refutation of the claims of Jews and Christians to the monopoly of salvation, the Quran mentions the fundamental principle that for salvation it is not of any avail to be a Christian or a Jew, but that it lies in اسلام which signifies absolute surrender to God's will and unqualified compliance with His word. He who secures this secures salvation; mere profession of a faith is not enough.

The word مُحْسِنٌ (the doer of good deeds), as also hinted under Important Words above, has been explained by the Holy Prophet as follows :

ان تعبد الله كأنك تراه فان لم تكن تراه فانه يراك

i.e. "you may become a مُحْسِنٌ only if you pray to or worship God in such a spirit of reality and certitude that you feel that you are seeing Him (and that God also is seeing you); or (with a lower degree of certitude) that you at least feel that God is seeing you." مُحْسِنٌ also means, one who does good to God's creatures. Thus according to Islam, salvation lies, (1) in اسلام or absolute submission to the will of God; and

114. And the Jews say, ^a‘The Christians stand on nothing’; and the Christians say, ^b‘The Jews stand on nothing’; while they *both* read the *same* Book. Even thus said those who had no knowledge, like what they say. But Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they disagree.¹²⁰

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ
النَّصَارَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ
كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ فَاللَّهُ
يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

^a5 : 69. ^b 5 : 69.

(2) in true worship of God offered with a perfect degree of certitude; and (3) in doing good to one's fellow-beings.

It is a distinctive feature of Islam that it makes its followers realize the presence of God and continued contact with Him a reality, and thus enables them to establish a true and permanent connection with Him even in this life. This is really the beginning of salvation. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement has explained this verse in the following beautiful words :—

“The verse alludes to the three important stages of perfect goodness, *i.e.*, (1) **فَا** (self-annihilation); (2) **بَا** (regeneration); and (3) **لَا** (union with God). The words **اسلم وجهه لله** (submits himself completely to Allah) teach that all our powers and organs and whatever belongs to us should be surrendered to God and devoted to His service. This state is known as **فَا** or death which a true Muslim must bring on himself. . . The second clause **وهو محسن** (and is the doer of good) alludes to the state of **بَا** or regeneration, for when a man is quickened by the love of God and all his movements become subservient to His will, his self dying entirely within him, he is, as it were, granted a new life which may be called **بَا** or regeneration. He lives for God, and through Him he lives for his fellow-beings. . . . The concluding words, *(he) shall have his reward with His Lord. No fear shall come upon such, neither shall they grieve,*

describe the third or the final stage—the stage of **لَا** or union with God. It is the highest stage of knowledge, certainty, trust and love. The reward of one's sincerity and devotion is not obscure or doubtful. It is certain, visible, and, as it were, tangible. In this stage man is so sure of the existence of God that he may be said to be actually seeing Him. No fear of the future darkens his faith. The dead past is buried and the living present has no sorrow for him. Every spiritual bliss is present. Such a state is termed **لَا** or union with God” (Ā'ina).

120. Important Words:

اليهود (the Jews) signifies the followers of Moses or of what is known as Judaism. The word as already explained is either derived from **هَاد** which means, he turned to God or to the truth with repentance (Aqrab); or it is derived from **يهودا** (Judah) who was one of the sons of Jacob. As the descendants of **يهودا** formed an independent kingdom at Jerusalem which became the religious centre of the Jews, therefore the Jewish religion came to be known as Judaism and the people professing that religion as **يهود** or Jews (Enc. Brit. under the word Jews. See also 2 : 63 and 2 : 112).

يتلون (they read) is derived from **تلا** which means: (1) he followed; (2) he read or recited (Aqrab). The Quran says **والقمر اذا تلاها** *i.e.* by the moon when it follows the sun; and

115. And who is more unjust than he who prohibits the name of Allah being glorified in "Allah's temples and seeks to ruin them? It was not proper for such men to enter therein except in fear. For them is disgrace in this world; and theirs shall be a great punishment in the next.¹²¹

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا
اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ
يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ ۚ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

^a9 : 17, 18 ; 22 : 26 ; 72 : 19, 20.

again يتلوا عليهم آياته i.e. the Prophet reads or recites to them God's Signs. In the present verse the word يتلون may be taken to signify either of these two senses i.e. they both read the same Book or they both follow the same Book. See also 2 : 103.

Commentary :

Nothing is more foreign to the spirit of Islam than opposition to truth, wherever it may happen to be. Islam teaches that all faiths possess certain truths and the true religion is so called not because it has a monopoly of truth but because it possesses all truth and is free from all defects. While therefore claiming to be a perfect and complete religion, Islam does not denounce other faiths but frankly acknowledges the truths and the virtues they possess. If this golden principle of Islam be properly understood and appreciated, much existing religious rancour and bitterness would disappear. But unfortunately there is a general tendency among the followers of different religious systems to refuse to acknowledge the truth found in faiths other than their own. The Quran declares this attitude of mind to be the result of lack of knowledge and wisdom, and this verse strongly condemns Jews and Christians for refusing to see any good whatever in the rival faith, in spite of the fact that they have a good deal in common, being the followers of the same Book—the Bible.

121. Important Words :

خرابها (their ruin) is derived from خرب. They say خرب البيت i.e. the house became desolate and deserted. The word خراب which is infinitive from it is the opposite of عمارة i.e. to build or to occupy and live in, and is used about a place when it becomes deserted and desolate and ruined (Aqrah).

Commentary :

This verse constitutes a strong indictment of those who carry their religious differences to such extremes that they do not even refrain from perpetrating outrages against the places of worship belonging to other creeds. They hinder people from worshipping God in their sacred places and even go so far as to destroy their temples. Such acts of violence are denounced here in strong terms and a lesson of tolerance and broad-mindedness is inculcated.

The Quran recognizes for all men the free and unrestricted right to use their temples and declares that if anybody wishes to worship God in a place of worship, he should not be prevented from doing so; for a temple or a mosque is a place dedicated to the worship of God and the person who prevents men from worshipping Him in it, in fact, contributes to its ruin and desolation.

This is what Islam teaches about respect for the places of worship, and yet it has come to be condemned as an intolerant religion. Islam is indeed the first and the only religion to

116. "To Allah belong the East and the West ; so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah. Surely, Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.¹²²

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ
اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٦﴾

2 : 143 ; 26 : 29 ; 55 : 18.

inculcate broad-mindedness and teach respect for the religious susceptibilities of all peoples ; and the Holy Prophet was the first person who carried this great and noble principle into actual practice. He allowed the Christians of Najran to hold their service in his own mosque, the celebrated مسجد النبي, when they came to have a religious discussion with him at Medina (Zurqānī).

It will be noted that the verse prescribes two punishments for those who prohibit the name of Allah being glorified in places of worship. One is disgrace in this world and the other is heavy punishment in the next. The punishment of disgrace is typical of the offence ; for a person who first builds a temple or a mosque with the object that the name of God may be remembered in it and then proceeds to prevent people from worshipping Him therein cannot but bring upon himself humiliation and disgrace in the eyes of the world. The words also contain a prophecy about the disbelievers of Mecca who prevented the Muslims from entering the Ka'ba. The prophecy was fulfilled when Mecca was taken and the infidels met with humiliation and disgrace.

Finally, it may be noted that the verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran advocates the unqualified access for all sorts of persons to all places of worship without regard to circumstances. In fact, only those who wish to use them for the specific purpose of God's worship and have no ulterior motive are allowed.

122. Important Words :

ثم (there) is a word generally used to denote a place that is remote from the speaker, unlike

the word ها which denotes a place that is near (Aqrah).

وجه الله (face of God). As explained under 2 : 113 the word وجه means: (1) face ; (2) attention ; (3) the thing itself ; (4) direction ; and (5) object and purpose (Aqrah).

Commentary :

This verse embodies a prophecy about the great and bright future of Islam. The Faithful are told that, being the teachers and proclaimers of truth and the bearers of Allah's standard, success would attend them wherever they went, and that through them Islam would spread all over the world, in the East as well as in the West. This prophecy was made at a time when the early Muslims—a mere handful of men—were being subjected to all sorts of trials and hardships and the future looked quite dark for them. But the prophecy was fulfilled not long after when, with the fall of Mecca, the whole of Arabia entered the fold of Islam and within less than a century the flag of Islam was flying in almost all the lands of the then known world. The words, *to Allah belong the East and the West*, also hint that Islam was to spread first in the East, and then, after the advent of the Promised Messenger of the Latter Days, it will begin to penetrate the West. So let the West prepare for it, as the time is not far off.

The words, *so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah*, throw light on the very high stage of spiritual development to which the Companions of the Holy Prophet had reached. God was so pleased with them and so satisfied with their condition that He undertook to crown all their campaigns with success. The

117. And they say, "Allah has taken to Himself a son". Holy is He! Nay, everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. "To Him are all obedient."¹²³

118. He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, "He does only say to it, 'Be', and it is."¹²⁴

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَنَهُ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَنُوتٌ ﴿١١٧﴾

بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا
يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿١١٨﴾

^a4:172; 6:101, 102; 10:69; 17:112; 18:5; 19:36, 89, 90; 21:27; 25:3; 39:5; 43:82.
^b30:27. ^c6:102. ^d3:48; 6:74; 16:41; 36:83; 40:69.

verse also implies that the Faithful would make no move that was not approved by God, and naturally therefore all their undertakings would meet with success.

123. Important Words:

قَانُوت (obedient) which is the plural of قَانِت is derived from قَانِت which means: (1) he obeyed; (2) he showed humility and submissiveness; (3) he remained silent, refraining from speech; and (4) he stood praying or he stood long in Prayer (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse speaks of the Christians with whom the Muslims were to come in contact in their great march as the torch-bearers of Islam. Failing to get converts from among the Jews, the early Christians turned their attention to the Romans and the Greeks but succumbed to their philosophies and freely borrowed ideas from them, incorporating them into their own beliefs and doctrines. As a result of this, Jesus began to be represented as the Son of God and the dogma of Trinity became the basic doctrine of the Christian faith. The expression "son of God" metaphorically used in Jewish religious literature in the sense of "a beloved servant of God" or "a Prophet" came to bear a literal connotation (Luke 20:36; Matt. 5:9, 45, 48; Deut. 14:1; Exod. 4:22; Gal. 3:26; Wisd. 2:18, etc.). The Quran has exploded this

doctrine and has, in the verse under comment, given several arguments to expose its falsity: (1) If God has a son, He must be subject to sexual desires and need a wife and be divisible, because the son is a part of the father's body. Again, He must be subject to death because the procreation of species, which the attribution of a son to God implies, is the characteristic of perishable things. But Islam repudiates all such ideas; for according to it God is holy and free from all defects and weaknesses. (2) One sometimes needs a son or a successor to extend one's dominion and bring into subjugation such territories as do not acknowledge one's rule. But God has no such need; for *everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him*. (3) A son or helper is sometimes required to keep under control the turbulent or far-flung parts of one's kingdom; but God has no such requirement, for "all are obedient to Him." Thus, from whatever angle we may view the question, God is proved to need no son, no helper or assistant to help Him in the work of controlling and managing the universe. In fact, it is blasphemy to say so. The argument is further elaborated in the next verse.

124. Important Words:

بَدِيع (Originator) is derived from بَدَعَ which means, he originated a thing or brought it

119. And those who have no knowledge say, 'Why does not Allah speak to us, or "a Sign come to us?"' Likewise said those before them similar to their saying. Their hearts are alike. We have certainly made the Signs plain for a people who firmly believe.¹²⁵

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا
آيَةً ۚ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ
تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾

^a6:38; 20:135; 21:6; 43:54.

into existence newly (*i.e.* for the first time, the thing not having existed before) and not after the similitude of anything pre-existing (Lane). The word ابداع (which is the infinitive form of بدع), when used about God, means, originating a thing without any tool or instrument or pattern and without matter (Mufradât). Thus the word combines the idea of originating and creating.

Commentary :

This verse not only contains a contradiction of the Christian dogma of the Godhead of Jesus but also effectively repudiates the Hindu theory that the soul and matter are primeval and eternal. God has been declared here to be:— (1) the Creator of the heavens and the earth which means that He did not require the help of a son, and for that matter of anybody, in creating the universe; (2) the Originator of the Universe, *i.e.*, He created all things out of nothing, without a pre-existing model and without pre-existing matter; (3) All-Powerful *i.e.* whenever He decrees that a certain thing should come into being, it does come into being in conformity with His decree and design.

It may be noted here that the verse does not necessarily mean, as is sometimes erroneously understood, that when God decrees that a certain thing should be, it comes into being at once. What the verse means is only this that God's will is all-powerful; so when He decrees a thing, nothing can thwart His decree. The verse does not thus refer to the factor of

time, which may be short or long as God wills it.

125. Commentary :

This verse refers to two very unreasonable demands of the People of the Book—Jews and Christians: (1) That God should speak to them direct and tell them that the Holy Prophet was His true Messenger; (2) That they should be shown Signs of their own devising.

In reply to the first demand, the Quran says that only ignorant people, unacquainted with the ways of God, make such a demand. This demand was made in the time of all the previous Prophets and was rejected as foolish. So it was unreasonable on their part to make from the Holy Prophet a demand which their own Prophets had not complied with.

In reply to their demand for a Sign, they are told that Signs sufficient for the guidance of right-minded people have already been shown and they could, if they so desired, profit by them, but nothing could avail an obstinate and perverse person. The fact that a demand for a Sign was made from the Holy Prophet does not show that no Signs had been shown by him. Indeed, if such a demand be considered as proof of the absence of Signs, no Prophet could be proved to have shown any Sign; for a similar demand was made from every Prophet of God, notably Jesus (Matt. 12:38, 39).

120. We have sent thee with the Truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. And thou wilt not be questioned about the inmates of Hell.¹²⁶

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ١٢٠

121. And the Jews will by no means be pleased with thee, nor the Christians, unless thou follow their creed. Say, 'Surely, Allah's guidance alone is the guidance.' And if thou follow their evil desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have, from Allah, no friend nor helper.¹²⁷

وَلَنْ تَرْضَى عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَى حَتَّى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ هُوَ الْهَدَىٰ وَلَئِنْ ابْتِغَتْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ١٢١

^a5:20; 6:49; 17:106; 33:46. ^b2:112. ^c2:146; 13:38.

It may be also noted here that whenever disbelievers are spoken of as demanding an آية or Sign, the word means either a Sign of their own devising or a Sign in the form of divine punishment (see 21:6, 7; 6:38—51; 13:28—33; 20:134, 135; 29:51).

126. Commentary:

As to the disbelievers' demand for a Sign of punishment, the Quran says that punishment is bound to visit those who refuse to believe in the Holy Prophet, because, like all other Prophets, he was the bearer of glad tidings for believers, and a warner for his opponents. Every student of history knows how clearly this prophecy was fulfilled. The world witnessed the ruin of the Holy Prophet's adversaries in a manner which has no parallel in history, although worldly conditions and circumstances were all in favour of the disbelievers and against the Holy Prophet.

The last-mentioned words of the verse, i.e., *thou wilt not be questioned about the inmates of Hell*, are a sort of consolation for the Holy Prophet who, owing to his great solicitude for

the people who disbelieved in him, was ever anxious about their fate. Elsewhere the Quran says, *It may be thou wilt grieve thyself to death, because they believe not* (26:4).

127. Important Words:

مِلَّة (creed) is derived from مل and means, among other things, religion; law of *Shari'at*; the right way (Lane).

أَهْوَاء (evil desires) is the plural of هوى (an evil desire). The verb هوى means, he or it fell or descended or came down from a higher position to a lower one. It also means, it rose or ascended. الموى means, a desire; an evil or low desire; an evil inclination; love and attachment. اتبع هواء means, he followed his evil inclination, i.e., swerved from the way of rectitude (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The words, *if thou follow their evil desires*, though apparently addressed to the Holy Prophet, are really general in their application, being meant for his followers. The Holy Prophet has been described in the Quran as a model for mankind and a paragon of perfection (3:32;

122. "They to whom We have given the Book follow it as it ought to be followed; it is these that believe therein. And whoso believes not therein, these are they who are the losers.¹²⁸

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

15. 123. O ye children of Israel! remember My favours which I bestowed upon you, and that I exalted you above all peoples.¹²⁹

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

^a3 : 114. ^bSee 2 : 41. ^cSee 2 : 48.

33: 22) and therefore he was infinitely above the possibility of complying with the evil wishes of the Jews and the Christians concerning the guidance he had directly received from God. At several other places in the Quran, the same form of address has been used. This is done to emphasize the importance of the commandment which is seemingly addressed to the Holy Prophet but is really meant for his followers (see 17 : 24). This mode of address is not peculiar to the Quran. In the Bible we come across similar instances (e.g. Deut. 16 : 21, 22).

128. Commentary :

The words, *they to whom We have given the Book*, clearly refer here to Muslims and not to Jews and Christians, because it is the Muslims that were the true and sincere followers of the Quran and not Jews and Christians who refused to believe in the Quran and rejected it as a piece of fabrication. Jews and Christians have been referred to in the concluding portion of the verse where, owing to their rejection of the Quran, they are spoken of as the losers. The verse provides very high and well-merited praise for the Companions of

the Holy Prophet who have been described as true followers of God's guidance.

129. Commentary :

Before proceeding to deal with the point that when the cup of the iniquities of the Jews became full to the brim, prophethood was transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael, God in this verse again reminds the Jews of the manifold favours He had conferred upon them, and by inference also reminds them of their crimes and wickednesses.

The favours which God showered upon the Israelites from the time of Moses to that of Jesus are briefly recounted in the preceding verses along with a tale of their misdeeds and iniquities. Particular reference has been made to the reprehensible treatment they meted out to the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Muslims, and finally the whole subject has been briefly recapitulated in the above verse, forming an introduction to the new theme, i.e., the transfer of prophethood from the House of Isaac to that of Ishmael. With the advent of the Holy Prophet a new era had been ushered and those who rejected him could no longer bask in the sunshine of God's favours.

124. And fear the day when "no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, nor shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor any intercession avail it, nor shall they be helped."¹³⁰

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَ
لَا يَقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةُ وَلَا هُمْ
يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

125. And *remember* when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands which he fulfilled, He said, 'I will make thee a Leader of men.' Abraham asked, 'And from among my offspring?' He said, 'My covenant does not embrace the transgressors'.¹³¹

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي
جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ
لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

^aSee 2:49. ^bSee 2:49. ^c2:131; 16:121, 122; 60:5.

130. Commentary :

This verse appears to deal with the same subject which has already been dealt with in 2:49; but on comparing the two, an interesting point of difference emerges. In the former verse the word شفاعَة (intercession) is put before the word عدل (ransom), whereas in the present one the order has been reversed. The reason for this change is that, in his endeavour to save himself, it is natural for man to adopt a course which is least expensive and entails minimum amount of hardship. Failing this, he tries to adopt other measures. In other words, man has recourse to offer a ransom only when he finds that he cannot gain his release without offering it. In verse 2:49 this natural order is maintained and intercession is put before ransom. But after that verse, many transgressions of the Israelites have been brought to light, especially their opposition to the Prophets, so now they could not rely much on intercession, and naturally felt constrained to think of offering a ransom first. Hence, the order observed in the former verse has been reversed in the latter. For a discussion of the subject of شفاعَة etc. see note on 2:49 above.

131. Important Words :

ابتلى (tried) is derived from بلى which means, it became old and worn out. ابتلاه and ابتلاه both mean, he tried or tested him or it, and this is so because a trial or a test makes one, as it were, old and worn out. ابتلاه means, a trial or test whether resulting in praise or disgrace (Aqrab).

امام (Leader of men) is derived from ام. They say ام بالقوم or ام القوم i.e. he led the people; he was or became Imām or leader of the people. The verb ام also means, he sought or aimed at a thing. The امام is a person whose example is followed, i.e., a leader or a model (Lane).

كلمات (commands) is the plural of كلمة and has a variety of meanings, e.g., a word; a clause or sentence; a command or order. Here it means, a command (Mufradāt). See also 2:38.

Commentary :

It is pointed out in this verse that when God tried Abraham with certain commands and found him perfect in obedience, He expressed His wish to make him a Leader of men. Thereupon Abraham, ever solicitous to make others

126. And *remember the time* when We made the House a resort for mankind and a place of security ; and "take ye the station of Abraham as a place of Prayer. And We commanded Abraham and Ishmael, *saying*, ' Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and those who remain therein for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate in Prayer '.¹³²

وَاذْجَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَاتَّخِذُوا
مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّٰٓءَ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنَّ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ
وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٦﴾

43 : 98 ; 22 : 27.

also share God's blessings, begged Him to extend the same to his progeny as well. In reply, he was told that this covenant would not apply to transgressors, which implied that Leaders and Reformers would be raised from his posterity, but that transgressors would not share this blessing.

The Quran refers to this covenant in order to remind the Jews that their deprivation of prophethood was quite in conformity with the promise given to Abraham which contained a clear condition that such of his descendants as defied God's commandments would be deprived of the promised favour. The Jews are therefore told that being transgressors, they have been deprived of the blessing of prophethood. A brief reference to this covenant is also found in Gen. 17 : 9—14, but the Quran has mentioned it in a better and more definite form.

132. Important Words :

مَثَابَةً (a resort) is derived from ثَاب which means, he returned. ثَاب النَّاسِ means, the people gathered together. ثَاب الْمَرِيضِ means, the patient returned to state of health. الثَّاب means, a place where people assemble ; a place of resort ; a place to which a visit entitles one to ثَوَاب or reward (Mufradāt & Aqrab). See also 2 : 104.

طَائِفِينَ (who perform the circuit) is the plural of طَاف which is derived from طَاف meaning, he

performed a circuit, he went round (Aqrab).

عَهِدْنَا (We commanded) is derived from عَهِدَ which means, he promised. عَهِدَ إِلَىٰ فُلَانٍ means, he enjoined upon or commanded him and made it a condition for him (Aqrab).

عَاكِفِينَ (who remain for devotion) is the plural of عَاكِفٌ which is derived from عَكَفَ. They say عَكَفَ فِي الْمَكَانِ i.e. he remained confined to a place, sticking to it. الْعَاكِفُ and الْإِعْتِكَافُ are words denoting a specified form of religious service in which the worshipper stays within the precincts of a mosque for a number of days which he passes in prayer and devotion (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

مَقَام (station) is derived from قَامَ i.e. he stood. مَقَام means, a place where one stands (Aqrab). Here it means the Ka'ba, where Abraham stood worshipping God. مَقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ is also the name of a place near the Ka'ba where, after making circuits around it, the pilgrims perform two rak'ats of Prayer. It appears that after completing the construction of the Ka'ba, Abraham said a prayer there in token of his gratitude to God ; and it is to commemorate this prayer of Abraham that Muslims are required to perform two rak'ats of Prayer there whenever they make circuits round the Ka'ba.

Commentary :

The verse means that a promise was made to Abraham that the Ka'ba would be made a مَثَابَةً

127. And *remember* when Abraham said, 'My Lord, "make this a town of peace and provide with fruits such of its dwellers as believe in Allah and the Last Day,' He said, 'And on him too who believes not will I bestow benefits for a little while; then will I drive him to the punishment of the Fire, and an evil destination it is.'¹³³

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ
إِلَى عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٧﴾

a3 : 98 ; 14 : 36 ; 27 : 92 ; 28 : 58 ; 29 : 68 ; 106 : 5.

or a place of reward and a centre where people would come together for worship. The truth of the first-mentioned part of the covenant, *i.e.*, that the Ka'ba is a place of reward, can only be recognized by believers who irresistibly feel the ennobling influence of a visit to the Holy Shrine. But the truth of the latter part of the prophecy, *i.e.*, that it would become a resort for men, has been established by the facts of history during the past fourteen hundred years, being testified to even by the enemies of Islam. The Ka'ba, as some traditions say and as hinted by the Quran itself, was originally built by Adam, and was, for some time, the centre of worship for his progeny. Then in the course of time people became separated into different communities and adopted different centres for worship. Abraham then rebuilt the Ka'ba and it continued to remain a centre of worship for his progeny through his son Ishmael. But with the lapse of time it was virtually converted into a house of idols which numbered as many as 360—almost the same as the number of days in a year. At the advent of the Holy Prophet, however, the Ka'ba was again appointed the centre of worship for all nations, the Holy Prophet having been sent as a Messenger for all mankind. Thus the nations who had separated after Adam were again brought together at the Ka'ba which was made the spiritual centre for all humanity and for all time.

Again, the Ka'ba, and, for that matter, the town of Mecca, is declared to be a place of peace and security. The truth of this prophecy is also beyond doubt. Mighty empires have crumbled and large tracts of land laid waste since the dawn of history, but the peace of Mecca has never been disturbed. The religious centres of other faiths have never claimed, and have in fact never enjoyed, such peace and immunity from danger. Jerusalem, Hardwar, Benares, etc., have all been conquered by alien conquerors and have been the scenes of much bloodshed and violence. But Mecca has ever remained a place of peace. No alien conqueror has ever entered it. The sacred town has always remained in the hands of those who have held it in reverence.

The commandment to purify the House of God refers not only to the outward cleaning of the House, but also to its purification from the abomination of idol-worship. The commandment was originally addressed to Abraham and Ishmael but it was finally and fully carried out by the Holy Prophet who, after the conquest of Mecca, cleared the Ka'ba of all the 360 idols that had been placed there by the idolatrous Quraish.

133. Important Words :

مَصِير (destination) is derived from مَار meaning, he returned, or he became. مَصِير is thus a place or condition to which a person

128. And remember the time when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, praying, 'Our Lord, "accept *this* from us; for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.¹³⁴

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ
رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾

a14: 41.

or thing comes or returns; a destination (Aqrah).

Commentary:

When Abraham offered the prayer, there was no town existing near the Ka'ba. There existed only the House of God. So Abraham prayed that in that wildest of wildernesses there might grow up a town, and that that town might become a place of security, affording peace to mankind. In fulfilment of this prayer there grew up the town of Mecca which has remained a place of peace and security for thousands of years. The prayer also implied that the *Baitullah* would be the means of bringing peace and security to mankind. This was destined to come about in two ways: *Firstly*, those who accepted and followed Islam were to become secure from all evils and to become recipients of God's blessings. *Secondly*, Islam was to be the means of bringing about peace and concord among the different nations of the world.

While praying to God to grant sustenance to the dwellers of Mecca, Abraham restricted his prayer only to its good and righteous dwellers. The reason of this was that when Abraham had previously prayed to God to raise Reformers and Religious Leaders from his progeny, God had replied that such men would be raised from among the righteous only (2: 125). So when he prayed a second time to God to grant sustenance to the people of Mecca, he was more careful and confined his prayer to the righteous only. This shows

how submissive and careful God's Prophets are. But Abraham had now evidently become over-cautious, for this time God answered, saying, that He would grant sustenance to all men, irrespective of whether they were righteous or not, because He was the Provider for the whole universe and not for the righteous only. The wicked, however, shall be duly punished for their crimes.

Another reason why Abraham restricted his prayer to the righteous was that he wished Mecca to be the abode of the righteous only; but God knew that even the sacred town was not going to remain untarnished throughout the long centuries of history.

134. Important Words:

When the unfitness of the Israelites for prophethood had been proved, the question naturally arose: What nation would then be the rightful heir to this favour of God? To answer this, reference is here made to the history of the building of the Ka'ba by Abraham and Ishmael, and it is added (vv. 128—130) that while constructing the Ka'ba, Abraham and Ishmael had offered certain prayers which were to bear fruit. These prayers were to the effect that the children of Abraham through Ishmael might multiply and prosper and there might be raised among them a great Prophet.

Whether Abraham was the founder or only the re-builder of the Ka'ba is a point that has given rise to much discussion. Some hold that Abraham was the first builder of the place, others trace the origin of the House to the days

of Adam and hold that Abraham only rebuilt it on its old ruins. The Quran and authentic traditions favour the view that even prior to the erection of a building on this site by Abraham some sort of structure did exist. Even in the verse under comment the words القواعد من البيت which may mean "the foundations that were left of the house," hint at the fact that a previous structure did exist but it had fallen into ruins and only a trace of the foundations remained. Elsewhere the Quran speaks of the Ka'ba, as *the first House founded (or built) for (the good of) mankind* (3:97). Now as people lived even before Abraham and some Prophets had also been raised before him, it stands to reason that some place of worship did exist for them and as the Ka'ba is the first house of that nature, it must be taken to have priority over all others.

Moreover, the Quran represents Abraham offering the following prayer at the time of his separation from Ishmael and his mother at Mecca: *Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House* (14:38). From this verse it is clear that the Ka'ba existed even before Abraham.

The sayings of the Holy Prophet also support this view. Describing the retreat of Abraham after leaving Hagar and Ishmael at the place where Mecca now stands, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Hagar inquired of Abraham why he was leaving them in a valley without any friend or sympathizer and without any food to eat. She asked the same question several times, but Abraham (probably overpowered by feelings) kept silent and made no reply. At last, she asked whether he was doing this under the order of God, and this time Abraham replied in the affirmative. Thereupon, Hagar said that in that case God would never let them perish. Then Abraham returned, and standing on a hillock, where he could not be seen by Hagar, he turned his

face to the Ka'ba, and raising both of his hands, offered the prayer: *Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House* (Bukhārī).

The above narrative related by the Holy Prophet shows that even before Abraham's going to the place where Mecca now stands it was held sacred, or else how could he have turned his face to it while offering the prayer and how could he have used the words "near Thy Sacred House." Nor does history say anything contrary to this view, because whatever information can be gleaned from it points to the fact that the Ka'ba is a very old place. Historians of established authority and even some hostile critics of Islam, have admitted that the Ka'ba has been held sacred from time immemorial. In this connection the following quotation may also be of interest. "Diodorus Siculus, Sicily (60 B.C.), speaking of the region now known as Hejaz, says that it was 'specially honoured by the natives' and adds, 'an altar is there built of hard stone and very old in years, . . . to which the neighbouring peoples thronged from all sides' (Translation by C. M. Oldfather, London, 1935, Book III, ch. 42 vol. ii. pp. 211—213). "These words," says William Muir, "must refer to the holy house of Mecca, for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of Arabia. . . . Tradition represents the Ka'ba as from time immemorial the scene of pilgrimage from all quarters of Arabia. . . . So extensive an homage must have had its beginnings in an extremely remote age" (Muir, p. ciii).

Some Christian critics question the truth of the claim that Abraham came to the site of Mecca and built the Ka'ba on the flimsy ground that the Bible is silent about it. It is not difficult to see the absurdity of this objection. There is no denying that the story of Abraham's leaving his wife Hagar and his son

129. ' Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee and *make* of our offspring a people submissive to Thee. And show us our ways of worship, and turn to us with mercy; for Thou art Oft-Returning *with compassion and Merciful*.¹³⁵

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً
مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٣٥﴾

Ishmael in a desert, the want of water, the extreme thirst of the boy and the providential appearance of a well are all mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 21:14—19). As, however, the Bible gives an extremely brief account of Ishmael's life, owing to the antipathy of the Jews towards him, it is not safe to decide the matter on its authority alone. It is an open secret that the sons of Israel looked upon the sons of Ishmael as their enemies. Therefore, far from preserving any record of the life of Ishmael, the Israelites were more likely to delete even such mention of him as might already have been contained in the Bible. At any rate, the Christians have no historical ground to reject the narrative of the Quran, especially when the well-known national traditions of Arabia all go to confirm it. Even some Christian writers have felt constrained to admit that the story of the Quran and the Traditions is true, or, at least, highly probable. "Freytag (Einl. p. 339) says that there is no good reason for doubting that the Caaba was founded as stated in this passage" (Rodwell under 2:128). Lieut. Burton in his *Pilgrimage* (iii. 336) refers to the Arab tradition which he says "speaks clearly and consistently as to the fact of Abraham having visited Mecca to build the Caaba", and considers it not to be without foundation. The Jerusalem Targum also speaks "of the visits of the 'very old man' Abraham to the tent of his nomad son, far away in the Arabian desert" (Jewish Foundation of Islam, p. 84). The Talmud

supports the view that Abraham went twice to see Ishmael after the latter had grown up to be a young man and had married (Selections translated by H. Polano, London, Tamuz 5636, p. 51).

135. Important Words:

مناسك (our ways of worship). The word مناسك is the plural of منسك which is derived from نك which means, he devoted himself to religious worship; he performed acts of worship for God; he slaughtered animals of sacrifice to win God's pleasure. مناسك الحج means, the religious rites or ceremonies of Pilgrimage; and also the places where these ceremonies are performed (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

Having built the House, Abraham and his son Ishmael turn towards God with the supplication that He may afford them the power to lead a life of devotion and submissiveness and show them the ways of such worship as may be performed in the Ka'ba.

This prayer of Abraham and Ishmael also brings out the very important point that even such righteous persons as stand high in the estimation of God need constant prayer for the further purification of their souls and for the consecration of their good deeds by God, because, however noble and righteous the deeds of man may outwardly appear to be, they sometimes lack the true inner spirit and lead to evil consequences.

130. 'And, Our Lord, raise up among them "a Messenger from among themselves, who may recite to them Thy Signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them; surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise."¹³⁶

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ
آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٣٦﴾

a2 : 152 ; 3 : 165 ; 62 : 3.

Abraham and Ishmael here use the words مسلم (Muslim) for themselves and also pray that from among their posterity too there may be born مسلم (Muslim) people who may be submissive and resigned to the will of God. This helps to explain another verse of the Quran which says of Abraham that it was he who first gave the name "Muslim" to the believers in the Holy Prophet. (22 : 79). It is not of course meant that Abraham used the word مسلم in the above quoted verse as a proper name, but his using that word in his prayer certainly suggests that from among his progeny would be born a people who would not only bear that name but would also possess the spirit of اسلام i.e. submission to the will of God.

136. Important Words :

آيَات (Signs) is the plural of آية which means, a sign, token, or mark by which a person or thing is known or recognized; it properly signifies any apparent thing inseparable from a thing not equally apparent, so that when one perceives the former, one knows that one also perceives the latter which one cannot perceive by itself; it also means a miracle, a wonder. The word is also used in the sense of a sentence; a part of speech; a verse (Lane & Aqrab).

كتاب (Book) means, anything written; a book; a prescribed law (Aqrab). See also 2 : 54.

حكمة (Wisdom) is derived from حكم (hakama).

They say, حكمة i.e. he prevented or restrained him (from acting in an evil manner). حكم بالامر means, he judged and decreed in the matter. حكم (hakuma) means, he became wise (Aqrab). حكمة means, what prevents or restrains one from ignorant behaviour; knowledge or science; knowledge of the true nature of things; wisdom or wisdom underlying a commandment; an action according to the requirements thereof (Mufradāt & Lane).

زكّاهم (purify them) is derived from زكى (zakkā) which again is derived from زكا meaning, he or it grew and increased and developed; he or it became purified. زكى means, he purified; he caused to grow and increase. تزكية means, the act of purifying and increasing (Aqrab).

العزیز (the Mighty) is derived from عز i.e. he was or became mighty, potent or powerful; or high, elevated or illustrious; or hard and resisting. عزیز means, mighty and powerful or high and elevated; or hard and resisting. It also sometimes means, distressing or grievous. العزیز used as the attributive name of God means, the Mighty Who overcomes everything; the Incomparable or Unparalleled (Lane). See also 2 : 207 and 5 : 55.

الحکیم (the Wise) is derived from the same root from which حكمة (for which see above) is derived. حکیم means, possessing knowledge or science or wisdom; wise; a sage; a philosopher; a physician; one who performs or executes affairs firmly, soundly, thoroughly, skilfully and well. الحکیم is one of the names

of God meaning the All-Wise (Lane). Applied to the Quran the word would signify the book that is full of wisdom and is free from all defect and imperfection, having no incongruity or unsoundness; or the book which judiciously decides religious differences.

Commentary :

In this verse which is one of the most important, attention is drawn to the prayer of Abraham when he was leaving his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael to live in the arid valley of Mecca. The great prayer was to the effect that God might raise from among the Meccans a Prophet, who should (1) lay before the people Signs of God that may carry conviction to their minds; (2) teach them the Law of God; (3) initiate them into the philosophy of divine commandments, because until the Wisdom underlying a commandment is brought home, one does not feel disposed to attend to it, but rather looks upon it as a burden, as was the case with the Christians who, unable to understand the underlying wisdom of the Mosaic Law, began to look upon it as a curse (Rom. 4:15; Gal. 3:13); and finally (4) purify the lives of men and open out to them the avenues of progress. See also 2:152.

This prayer of Abraham, offered from the very depth of his heart, was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet. The wonderful way in which the Holy Prophet combined in his person the four characteristics mentioned in this prayer is a fact of history to which even his most hostile critics have testified. By universal consent the Prophet of Islam has been acclaimed as "the most successful Prophet."

The fact that Abraham did not here pray for many Prophets, but for one Prophet only shows that while offering this prayer he had in view a very great Prophet, a Master-Prophet who was to transcend all. This prayer of Abraham has been applied by the Holy Prophet to

himself. He is reported to have said *انا دعوة ابراهيم* i.e. "I am the prayer (personified) of Abraham" (Jarir & 'Asākir).

As mentioned in the introductory remarks in the beginning of this chapter, the verse under comment serves as a summary of the entire chapter which is not only an enlargement of the subject-matter of this verse but treats its various subjects in exactly the same order in which they have been mentioned in this verse, i.e., first come the Signs, then the Book, then the Wisdom of the Law, and last of all the means of national progress.

It may be of interest to note here that the Quran speaks of two separate prayers of Abraham—one about the progeny of Isaac and the other about that of Ishmael. The former prayer has been mentioned in 2:125 and the latter in the verse under comment. In his prayer about the progeny of Isaac, Abraham asks that *Imāms* or Reformers may be raised from among them, but he makes no mention of their special work or status—they are ordinary Reformers who will follow one another for the reformation of the Israelites. On the other hand, when Abraham prays about the progeny of Ishmael, he begs his Lord to raise among them a special Prophet with a specific and lofty mission. Again, when God answers the first-mentioned prayer of Abraham, He does not make any mention of the Reformers to be raised but leaves their appearance to be inferred only by implication; but He does make a pointed reference to the fact that in spite of these Reformers, the Israelites will end as transgressors. On the contrary, God makes no such mention about the progeny of Ishmael, thereby hinting that after the Promised Prophet has been raised, their glorious days will continue till the end of the world. This is indeed a marvellously true portrait of the two branches of the House of Abraham.

In making mention of the prayers of Abraham in verses 127 to 130 the Quran makes an allusion

to the fact that Abraham did not only pray for the prosperity of the children of Isaac but also for the posterity of Ishmael, his first-born. When the offspring of Isaac lost the gift of prophethood on account of their evil deeds, the next descendants of Abraham were the children of Ishmael and thus the Promised Prophet must belong to the House of the latter. In order to point out that the expected Prophet was to be an Ishmaelite, the Quran makes mention of the construction of the Ka'ba by Abraham and Ishmael and of the prayers offered by Abraham for the posterity of his eldest son.

To this natural conclusion Christian critics generally bring forward two objections: (1) that the Bible makes no mention of any promise having been made by God to Abraham concerning Ishmael, and (2) that, admitting that God did make such a promise, there is no proof of the fact that the Prophet of Islam was descended from Ishmael.

As regards the first objection, it should be borne in mind that even if the Bible be shown to contain no prophecy about Ishmael, the absence of such a mention in it cannot be considered as conclusive testimony that such a prophecy was not actually made. It is no secret that Sarah, the mother of Isaac, hated Ishmael and his mother, Hagar. This hatred of their mother for the House of Ishmael was inherited by her sons, the Israelites. (Gen. 16:12). In these circumstances it would be idle to search for any express prophecy in favour of Ishmael and his progeny in the Bible, particularly when it was for a long time subjected to all sorts of interference on the part of the Israelites. Moreover, if the Biblical evidence can be taken to establish the existence of a promise about Isaac and his sons, why should not the evidence of the Quran and, for that matter, of the children of Ishmael, be accepted to establish the fact that promises were held out by God to Ishmael and his sons

also. But the undeniable fact is that the Bible does contain references to the future prosperity of the sons of Ishmael similar to those it contains about the sons of Isaac. The following are some of these references:—

(1) "And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17:9, 10). This covenant was made with Abraham before the birth of Isaac and after Ishmael had been born, which shows that it applied to Ishmael and his children.

(2) "And the angel of the Lord said unto her (Ishmael's mother), I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man (it appears that here some expression like "Arab" or the dweller of a desert country, has been translated as "wild"); his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." i.e. although all will constantly oppose him and be jealous of him, yet he will succeed (Gen. 16:10—12).

(3) Further evidence of Ishmael and his posterity being included in the covenant which God established between Himself and Abraham and his seed after him is furnished by Gen. 17:6—8 which says, "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and

I will be their God." Now, has not the land of Canaan remained in the possession of the Ishmaelites for over 1,300 years? If the Arab Muslims are not the seed of Abraham, why has Canaan continued in their possession for so long?

(4) Again in Gen. 17:18—20, we read:—

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! and God said, . . . And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." It will thus be seen that the promises made for Ishmael are similar to those made for Isaac; nay, they are even greater in number, for, with regard to Ishmael, God says, (a) "I have blessed him"; (b) "I will make him fruitful"; (c) "I will multiply him exceedingly"; (d) "twelve princes shall he beget"; and (e) "I will make him a great nation."

(5) Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was included in God's covenant is furnished by the fact that circumcision which was instituted by God as a token of His covenant with Abraham and his seed after him, has continued among the descendants of Ishmael. Though Islam also enjoined it, yet it was already in vogue among the Arabs, which shows that they were the seed of Abraham and were consequently included in the covenant of which circumcision was instituted as a symbol.

In order to exclude Ishmael from God's covenant, Christian writers sometimes bring forward the plea that the offspring of a handmaid cannot be included in Abraham's seed. But this is entirely baseless; for, even conceding, for the sake of argument, that Ishmael's mother was a handmaid, it has been clearly said with reference to Ishmael: "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation because he is thy seed" (Gen. 21:13).

The above-quoted verses of the Bible show: (1) that Ishmael was born according to the promise of God given to Abraham before Ishmael's birth; (2) that God blessed Ishmael and his mother, Hagar; (3) that He promised to make Ishmael and his mother fruitful and to multiply them exceedingly; (4) that God was with Ishmael; and (5) that the covenant of God with Abraham about the circumcision of every male child among his progeny applied to Ishmael and his children.

As a matter of fact, the promise made to Ishmael does not differ very much from that made to Isaac; they are both to be blessed, both to be made fruitful, the descendants of both to multiply exceedingly and both are to be made great nations, and kingdom and dominion is promised to the progeny of both. So when the nature of the promise made to both the brothers does not substantially differ, the kind of reward granted to the children of Isaac will have also to be admitted for the children of Ishmael. It would be wrong to think that as in Gen. 17:21 it is written that God will establish His covenant with Isaac, so Prophets were meant to be raised from among his children only, for a similar covenant was made with Abraham even before the birth of Isaac, and this clearly applied to Ishmael. This covenant is contained in Gen. 17:10, 11 according to which Ishmael was circumcised at the age of 13 and thenceforward circumcision became a religious rite with the posterity of Ishmael. It is therefore beyond any shadow of doubt that the covenant referred to above was intended for the children of Ishmael quite as much as for the children of Isaac. This fact has even been admitted by some eminent Christian writers of established authority (The Scofield Reference Bible, p. 25).

So far about verbal promises. Now let us see how God practically treated Ishmael. We read in Gen. 21:14—20, "And Abraham rose

up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

This shows that God rendered miraculous help to Ishmael and brought into existence a well of water for his sake. It is now for the Christians to show what extraordinary thing God wrought for Isaac that may be compared with this. In the above passage it is also said that "God was with the lad," which means that Ishmael grew up under the special protection of the Lord.

Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was looked upon as the seed of Abraham, on a par with Isaac, is furnished by the following circumstances:

In Gen. 25:6, we read that when Abraham grew old and was nearing his end, he sent away the sons of the concubines. And then the Bible goes on to say: "And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred three score and fifteen years, and Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man full of

years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah." (Gen. 25:7-9). Now, if Ishmael was also treated as the offspring of a concubine, he ought to have been treated as the other children, who were the issue of concubines, were treated. But such was not the case; for when Abraham died, the children of the concubines were away and only Ishmael and Isaac were present, and both of them participated in the burial ceremony of their father. This shows that Ishmael was not treated as the offspring of a concubine, but was looked upon as the equal of Isaac and was treated accordingly.

In reply to the second objection that even if the covenant be understood to include the sons of Ishmael, it is yet to be proved that the Holy Prophet belonged to the House of Ishmael, the following points may briefly be noted:—

(1) The best way to know the origin of a race is to refer to the traditions and the testimony of the race itself; and, as we all know, the Quraish, the tribe to which the Holy Prophet belonged, always believed and declared themselves to be the descendants of Ishmael and this claim was recognized by all the people of Arabia.

(2) If the claim of the Quraish and, for that matter, that of other Ishmaelite tribes of Arabia, to Ishmaelite descent had been false, the real descendants of Ishmael would have protested against such a false claim; but no such objection is known to have been ever raised.

(3) In Gen. 17:20 God had promised to bless Ishmael, to multiply his progeny, to make him a great nation and the father of twelve princes. If the people of Arabia are not his descendants, where is the promised nation? The Ishmaelite tribes of Arabia are indeed the only claimants in the field,

(4) According to Gen. 21:8—14 Hagar had to leave her home in order to satisfy the vanity of Sarah. If she was not taken to Hedjaz, where are her descendants found, and which is the place of her banishment?

(5) After her banishment Hagar dwelt in the wilderness of Paran (Gen. 21:21). Christian writers have tried to prove that Paran is Feiran near Jebel Serbal in the Sinai Peninsula. But the great English Commentator of the Old Testament, who devoted his whole life to the study of the Bible, Dr. S. R. Driver, has had to confess after all that "the site of Paran, from which the wilderness derives its name, is, however, unknown" (Deut. p. 4). On the contrary, the Arab geographers are all agreed that Paran is the name given to the hills of Hedjaz (Mu'jam al-Buldān).

(6) We are told that the generations of Ishmael "dwelt from Havilah unto Shur" (Gen. 25:18) and the phrase "from Havilah unto Shur" designates the opposite extremes of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. by J. Eadie, London, 1862).

(7) The Bible calls Ishmael "a wild man" (Gen. 16:12) and the word اعرابي (A'rābī) "a dweller of the desert" conveys almost the same sense.

(8) Even Paul has admitted Hagar's connection with Arabia (Gal. 4:25).

(9) Kedar was a son of Ishmael and it is admitted that his descendants settled in the southern part of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. London, 1862).

(10) Prof. C. C. Torrey says: "The Arabs were Ishmaelites according to the Hebrew tradition . . . The 'twelve princes' (Gen. 17:20) subsequently named in Gen. 25:13ff, represent Arabian tribes or districts; notice especially Kedar, Duma (Dumat al-Jandal), Teima. The great nation is the people of Arabia." (*Jewish Foundation of Islam*, p. 83).

(11) Similarly, the learned authors of the *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*, New York,

(1877, p. 685) admit that "the Arabs, from physical characteristics, language, the occurrence of native traditions. . . . and the testimony of the Bible are mainly and essentially Ishmaelites."

(12) Lastly there is the opinion of Narsai, a Syrian writer who lived about a hundred years before the birth of the Holy Prophet. Mingana quotes Narsai as saying: "The raid of the sons of Hagar was more cruel even than famine, and the blow that they gave was more sore than disease; the wound of the sons of Abraham is like the venom of a serpent and perhaps there is a remedy for the poison of reptiles but not for theirs—let us always blame the foul inclination of the sons of Hagar, and specially the people (the tribe) of Kuraish who are like animals." (Leaves from Three Ancient Qurans, edited by the Rev. A. Mingana, D.D. Intro. xiii).

In the face of these conclusive proofs both the objections, that (1) Ishmael was not included in the covenant which God made with Abraham, and that (2) Ishmael did not settle in Arabia or that the Holy Prophet of Islam was not a descendant of Ishmael, fall to the ground.

Before passing on to the next verse a brief reference to Hagar, mother of Ishmael, will not be out of place here. C. J. Ellicott, Lord Bishop of Gloucester, says in his Commentary: "Hagar . . . was to be, not Abraham's concubine, but his wife" (Vol. 1, p. 69). The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel tell us that "Sarah. . . took Hagar. . . and set her free, and gave her to Abraham, her husband, to wife" (Translation by J. W. Etheridge, London, 1862, p. 205). This setting free of the "handmaid" or "bondwoman" does not imply that Hagar was a barbarian slave or that she was a slave from her very childhood. Sir Leonard Wooley says that she was a "civilised creature sprung from the second great centre of culture in the ancient world" (Abraham, London, 1936, p. 144).

- R. 16 131. And who will turn away from the religion of Abraham but he who is foolish of mind? ^bHim did We choose in this world, and in the next he will surely be among the righteous.¹³⁷

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبْ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ
وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ
لَكِنَّ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

132. When his Lord said to him, 'Submit', he said, 'I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds'.¹³⁸

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

^a3 : 96 ; 4 : 126 ; 6 : 162. ^b2 : 125 ; 3 : 34 ; 16 : 121, 122 ; 60 : 5. ^c3 : 68 ; 4 : 126.

"According to Midrash," says another authority, "Hagar had been given as a slave to Abraham by her father, the Pharaoh of Egypt, who said, 'My daughter had better be a slave in the house of Abraham, than mistress in any other'" (Translation of the Targums by J. W. Etheridge, note 8, on page 204).

137. Important Words :

يرغب (will turn away) is derived from رغب which is used either with the preposition في or عن giving different meanings. رغب فيه means, he sought or desired it ; and رغب عنه means, he turned away from it or he left or loathed it (Aqrab).

سفه نفسه (is foolish of mind). The word سفه is used in three different forms : (1) سفه (safihā), (2) سفاه (safahā), and (3) سفاهة (safuḥa). All these give different meanings. The Quran uses the first form i.e. سفه (safihā) which means, he was ignorant or he behaved ignorantly ; he was foolish or he acted foolishly ; he was light-witted or he behaved light-wittedly. When the word سفه is used with نفسه as its seeming object as in the verse under comment, it does not actually become transitive but simply looks so (as does the verb خسر which see under 2:28). In fact, as most lexicographers have explained, the expression سفه نفسه is really either سفه في نفسه or سفه هو نفسه or

سفهت نفسه and means, either he is foolish of mind, or he is foolish himself, or his mind acts foolishly (Aqrab, Mufradāt, Lisān & Lane).

اصطفيناه (him did We choose) is derived from صفا which means, it became pure and clean. بكذا اصفا means, he chose him for that, or he honoured him with that. اصطفاه means, he chose or selected him from among others ; he chose him in preference to others (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The attention of Jews and Christians is drawn to the point that when it has been proved that, in accordance with the prayer of Abraham, a Prophet was to appear from among the children of Ishmael and that Prophet has actually appeared, it is incumbent upon them to ponder over his claims and not to belie the prayer of Abraham and go against their own religion. The verse emphasizes the fact that anybody who departs from the way of the great patriarch of the People of the Book betrays his own folly. The religion of Abraham leads to salvation, whereas defection from it leads to ruin and deprivation.

138. Important Words :

اسلم (submit), being in the imperative mood, means, submit or surrender or resign thyself ; or

133. The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons,—and so did Jacob— **وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ بَنِيَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ** ^{١٣٣}
saying: ‘O my sons, truly Allah has chosen this religion for you; ^aso let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission.’¹³⁹

^a3 : 103.

become a Muslim i.e. one resigned to God, For a fuller discussion of the word see 2 : 113.

Commentary :

The Jews are here told that the greatness of their ancestor Abraham lay in the fact that he was always ready to submit fully and resign himself completely to the will of God. So if they too wish to become great in the sight of God, they should also submit to Him and obey His commands and accept His Prophet.

The verse beautifully describes Abraham's religion. When God asked him to submit, he immediately replied, *I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds*. This reply of Abraham points to two important inferences: (1) That Abraham does not use the words “I will submit” or even “I do submit” but *I have submitted*, which means that he was so eager to obey his Lord that he took no time in making his submission, as if the act were already a thing accomplished. (2) That Abraham does not merely say, *I have submitted*, but adds the words, *to the Lord of the worlds*, which signifies that his submission was not based on any ulterior motive but on the simple fact that the ‘Being’ to Whom he was submitting was the Lord and Master of the world and hence entitled to obedience.

139. Important Words :

وَمِى (enjoin upon). **وَمِى** **فَلَا يَكُذَّ** means, he enjoined this upon him, he ordered him to do this, he charged him with this. **وَمِى** **عَلَيْهِ بِالْأَمْرِ** means, he exhorted him or enjoined him to

observe Prayers. **وَمِى** **لَهُ بِأَمْرِهِ** means, he made a will in his favour, making him heir of his property after his death (Aqrab).

Commentary :

Abraham not only submitted himself to the will of God but also took special care that his children too should inculcate that spirit and lead lives of submission and resignation. The name of Jacob or Israel (grandson of Abraham) has been particularly added here to point to the fact that as Jacob also issued a similar injunction to his children, it becomes all the more binding on the Israelites to submit to the will of God and accept the Prophet who has come with the specific mission of **إِسْلَام** i.e. submission to God's will.

The words, *so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission*, beautifully point to the fact that as nobody knows the time of his death, one should always lead a life of submission to God's will so that whenever death comes, it may not find one in a state other than that of submission. The words may also mean that a true believer should be so perfectly resigned to God's will and should so completely win His pleasure that He may, out of His limitless bounty, arrange that death may not come to him except at a time when he is resigned to His will.

This, as well as the preceding verse, forcefully brings out the important point that Islam really means absolute obedience and complete submission to the will of God. Only he who is completely resigned to the will of God is a

134. Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons, 'What will you worship after me?' They answered, 'We will worship thy God, the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One God; and to Him we submit ourselves.'¹⁴⁰

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَاللَّهُ أَبَاكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

true Muslim. Thus every true pre-Islamic religion that inculcated the spirit of submission will, within this meaning of the term, fall under the true definition of Islam, because previous to the religion preached by the Holy Prophet, to follow Islam was to obey the then expressed will of God, or, in other words, the revelation of the day. The point of difference between the religion brought by the Holy Prophet and the other true faiths that preceded it is, that though Islamic in essence, those faiths were not called by the name of Islam, the reason for this being that they were not perfect and each of them was to be replaced by a succeeding one, and so, if all these had been given the name of Islam, there would have been great confusion. Hence, only the faith which was perfect in every way and was meant for all mankind and was to last for ever was given that name so that its very name might be illustrative of its underlying purpose. The name Islam is "the new name" referred to in Isa. 62 : 2.

When the Quran calls the former Prophets Muslims, it does not obviously mean that they followed Quranic teachings. What it means is only this that, as explained above, they followed the true faith of their day and manifested in themselves, though partly of course, the spirit of *إسلام* i.e. submission to the will of God.

140. Important Words :

الله (God) is derived from *ال* (*alaha*) which means, he worshipped. So *الله* means, a thing or person or being worshipped, whether true or false ; a deity (*Aqrab*).

Commentary :

Jacob or Israel was the son of Isaac who was a son of Abraham. Thus Ishmael was the uncle of Jacob, and yet the children of Jacob here include Ishmael among their "fathers" which proves two things: *firstly*, that the word *اب* (father) is also used of uncle; and *secondly*, that up to the time of Jacob's sons Ishmael was held in due respect by the Israelites. Nay, the children of Israel mention the name of Ishmael even before that of their own grandfather, Isaac, and do not mention any other son of Abraham.

The words, *were you present when death came to Jacob*, signify that the principle of submission to the will of God is not an innovation introduced by Islam, but has been recognized by good and righteous people in all times and even Israel, the founder of the Jewish tribes, acted upon that principle, so much so, that the only thought that came to his mind when death approached him was to enjoin the same noble principle upon his children. Israel wished his sons to become pious Muslims; will not the Jews of the Holy Prophet's day act upon that principle?

135. "Those are a people that have passed away; for them is that which they earned, and for you shall be what you earn, and you shall not be questioned as to what they did."¹⁴¹

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا
كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تَسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

136. And they say, "Be ye Jews or Christians that you may be rightly guided." Say: "Nay, follow ye the religion of Abraham who was 'ever inclined to God'; he was not of those who set up gods with God."¹⁴²

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ
مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

^a2:142. ^b2:112. ^c3:68; 6:80; 16:124; 22:32.

In corroboration of what the Quran says about Jacob's will to his sons, Rodwell quotes the following from Midrash Rabbah: "At the time when our father Jacob quitted this world, he summoned his twelve sons and said to them, Harken to your father Israel (Gen. 49:2). Have you any doubts in your hearts concerning the Holy One, blessed be He. They said, Hear, O Israel, our father, as there is no doubt in thy heart, so neither is there in ours. For the Lord is our God, and He is One" (Midr. Rabbah on Gen. par. 98, and on Deut. par. 2). Compare also Targ. Jer. on Deut. 6:4.

141. Commentary:

The People of the Book are here warned that the fact that they are the descendants of God's Prophets would not avail them in any way. Their forefathers reaped the rewards of their good deeds and won God's favours; and if they also wish to become His favourites, they must perform similar deeds and show implicit obedience to God and complete submission to His will. The fact that they are descended from holy persons makes them all the more responsible.

142. Important Words:

حنيف (ever inclined to God) is derived from حنفا which means, he became inclined. حنيف means: (1) one who turns away from error to guidance (Mufradât); (2) one who steadily follows the right faith and never swerves from it; (3) one inclining in a perfect manner to Islam and continuing firm therein (Lane); (4) one who follows the religion of Abraham (Aqrab).

Commentary:

There is a notion prevalent among the followers of different religions that salvation is confined to their respective folds only. This view is, however, quite erroneous. Salvation depends upon the grace and mercy of God, and submission to His will is the only way to win His grace and mercy. So long as the following of a religion involves submission to God's will, there is salvation in it. But when this condition ceases to exist in a religion, that religion can no more offer salvation. The verse points out that the Jews and the Christians are wrong in asserting that the bare entry of a person into their respective religions assures salvation. Not so, says Allah, but salvation lies in what Abraham taught—absolute submission to God's will. And

137. Say ye: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to *all other* Prophets from their Lord. ^bWe make no difference between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves'.¹⁴³

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ
وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ
لَا نَفَرِقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

^a3 : 85. ^b2 : 286 ; 3 : 85 ; 4 : 153.

Abraham was a rightly guided person who taught and practised the spirit of Islam.

The words, *he was not of those who set up gods with God*, are not used here to remove any misconception about Abraham but to point out to the People of the Book that, while their progenitor Abraham was not an idol-worshipper, they had for themselves practically set up so many equals to God. They outwardly professed belief in God's Oneness but in their hearts lay hidden scores of idols which they loved and revered as one should love and revere God alone.

143. Important Words :

اسباط (children) is derived from سبط. They say سبط الشعر i.e. the hair was or became loose and hanging. سبط المطر means, the rain was copious and extensive. سبط signifies the idea of length and extensiveness. شعر سبط means, hair that is long and not curly. سبط الكفين means, a generous man, literally one possessing long and open hands, because his helping hand extends to every needy person. A grandson is also called سبط because his birth signifies increase of progeny. In a still wider sense, the word might signify progeny generally. The expression here refers to the twelve tribes of Israel named after the twelve sons of Jacob : Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher (Gen. 35 : 23—26 ; 49 : 28).

Commentary :

The verse is addressed to Muslims who are enjoined to reply to Jews and Christians by saying that the central point in religion is belief in, and submission to, God; and so everything that comes from God must be accepted and it is simply foolish to say that a people believing in some Prophets of God need not believe in others. All Messengers of God and all revelations coming from Him must be accepted and no distinction is to be made between this Prophet and that or between this revelation and that, so far as belief in them is concerned. One Prophet may be higher in status than another and one revelation may be more important than another; but all of them must be accepted without discrimination. The words, *to Him we submit ourselves*, have been used as an argument in support of the above assertion. When we submit to God, everything coming from Him must be accepted.

It indeed redounds to the great credit of Islam that it is the only religion which recognizes the Prophets of all countries and all nations, whereas other faiths limit prophethood only to their own respective spheres. Naturally the Quran mentions only the names of those Prophets who were known to the Arabs to whom the message of Islam was first given; but it makes a general remark to the effect

138. And "if they believe as you have believed, then are they surely guided; but if they turn back, then they are only creating a schism, and Allah will surely suffice thee against them, for He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."¹⁴⁴

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِبِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣٨﴾

43 : 21.

that, there is no people to whom a warner has not been sent (35 : 25).

As already pointed out, this verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran regards all Prophets to be equal in rank. In fact, the Quran clearly states that different Prophets possess different ranks, some of them being spiritually higher than others (2 : 254). The sentence, *We make no difference between any of them*, thus only means that a Muslim makes no distinction between the different Prophets in respect of their prophethood.

Some Christian critics have objected to the verse under comment and have demanded proof of the prophethood of Ishmael. But what proof is there, it may be asked, of the prophethood of Isaac? If the Bible testifies to the prophethood of Isaac, the Quran testifies to the prophethood of Ishmael. If the testimony of the Quran cannot be accepted as a proof for the prophethood of Ishmael, there is no earthly reason why the testimony of the Bible be accepted as a proof for Isaac's prophethood. And even the Bible is not without evidence of the fact that God made a number of promises to Abraham about the future greatness of Ishmael and his progeny (see note on 2 : 130).

144. Important Words :

شِقَاق (schism) is from شاق which is from شق meaning, he split up a thing, or he tore it up. شق عصا القوم means, he created a split or schism

in the community which before stood united. شق النبات means, the vegetation sprouted forth from the earth. الشق means, one side as opposed to another. شانه means, he opposed him and became hostile to him so that each sided with a different party. شقاق means, opposition; hostility; schism; being mutually remote (Aqrab). The word شقان however, is not used about the party which sides with the truth (Muhit).

Commentary :

Muslims are here told that if Jews and Christians come to agree with them in holding that religion is not an hereditary matter, but consists in accepting all revealed guidance, then they are one with them; otherwise, their ways stand apart and a wide gulf separates them, responsibility for the schism and the resulting hostility in this case lying with Jews and Christians and not with the Muslims.

In this case, however, Muslims should not be afraid of Jews or Christians; for God is on their side and the God of Islam is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. If they pray to Him for protection, He will answer their prayers; and even if there comes a time when they cannot pray, He will protect them; for He is not only All-Hearing but is also All-Knowing. The verse also refers to the special and personal divine protection promised to the Holy Prophet (5 : 68) in view of the repeated attempts made by the Jews upon his life.

139. Say, 'We will adopt the religion of Allah; and who is better than Allah in teaching religion, and Him alone do we worship.'¹⁴⁵

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً زَوْجُنْ
لَهُ عِندُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

140. Say: 'Do you dispute with us concerning Allah, while He is our Lord and your Lord? And for us are our works, and for you your works; and to Him alone we are sincerely devoted.'¹⁴⁶

قُلْ أَتُحَاجُّونَنِي اللَّهُ وَهُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا
أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

^a28 : 56 ; 42 : 16 ; 109 : 7.

145. Important Words:

صبغة (religion) is derived from صبغ. They say صبغ يده في الماء i.e. he dyed or coloured it. صبغ means, he immersed his hand in the water. صبغ يده بالعمل means, he laboured in work and became notable therein. اصطبغ بهذا means, he became dyed or coloured with it. صبغة means, dye or colour; kind or mode of a thing; religion; code of laws; baptism. صبغة الله means, God's religion; the nature with which God has endowed men (Aqrah). Religion is called صبغة because it covers a man like a dye or colour.

Commentary:

In the verse the word صبغة (religion) is used as an object, the subject of which is understood. According to the rules of Arabic Grammar, sometimes when it is intended strongly to induce a person to do a certain thing, the verb is omitted and only the object is mentioned. Therefore words like اخذوا (adopt) or اتبعوا (follow) will be taken to be understood before the words صبغة الله and the clause would mean, "adopt or follow the religion which God wishes you to adopt or follow." This indeed is the true baptism which can make one acquire God's attributes and become His living manifestation. Compare with it the Christian baptism which seeks to procure for a man forgiveness of sins and everlasting life by the mere act of immersing him in water or sprinkling it on him at

his christening ceremony.

146. Important Words:

خلص (sincerely devoted) is derived from خلص which means, he or it became pure. اخلص means, he was or became sincere in obedience. اخلص له الحب means, he was sincere in his love for him, lit. he made his love true for him (Aqrah). اخلص الله means, he was sincere to God or he was sincere in his connection with Him (Lane & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to the People of the Book that it is God Who has sent His revelation to him and that they should not dispute God's choice, because He is as much the God of the Muslims as He is theirs, and He knows the works of both. He is the Creator of all and His grace is not confined to any one tribe or country. So, if God has now selected an Ishmaelite for the office of prophethood and has chosen the Arabs for His grace, they should not reject him on that account. The central point of faith is the person of God, and if one is sincere in his connection with Him, there should be no hesitation in accepting anything that emanates from Him. The real question is, whether God has indeed chosen Muhammad (peace and the blessings of God be on him!) to be His Messenger. If that question is answered

141. 'Do you say that "Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and his children were Jews or Christians? Say, 'Do you know better or Allah?' And who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony that he has from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do.¹⁴⁷

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى قُلْ ءَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾

142. 'Those are a people that have passed away; for them is what they earned, and for you shall be what you earn; and you shall not be questioned as to what they did.¹⁴⁸

تِلْكَ أُمَمٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

^a3 : 85 ; 4 : 164. ^b2 : 284. ^cSee 2 : 135.

in the affirmative, nothing should stop a man from accepting Islam; and if he rejects Islam, he ranges himself against God, be he a Jew, a Christian, a Hindu or any other.

147. Commentary :

In this verse Jews and Christians have been indirectly asked how Abraham and his children would fare, if salvation were monopolized by them. If they replied that these holy persons were also Jews or Christians, it would be against all the facts of history, because they belonged to pre-Mosaic times when Jewish and Christian religions had not yet come into existence.

Some short-sighted persons attach so much importance to their own views that they begin to ascribe them to every righteous servant of God. In their discussions, Jews and Christians represented even those of their ancestors who lived before their religions came into existence as the followers of their own faiths.

This is the attitude not only of the ignorant masses, but even educated people sometimes fall a prey to this delusion. Many Christians of great learning hold the untenable belief that even those Prophets and other righteous people who lived before Jesus were saved through his alleged death on the cross. Such men should beware of God's judgement, as He is not unaware of their deeds.

148. Commentary :

Jews and Christians are once more warned against relying upon those of their forefathers who won the pleasure of God by their good deeds. It is their own deeds and not those of others that will save them. Their own good actions alone can bring them salvation and not the fact that they are the descendants or followers of Abraham, Jacob, Moses or Jesus. *No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another*, says the Qurān (6 : 165).

- 17 143. The foolish among the people will say: 'What has turned them away from their Qibla which they followed?' Say: "To Allah belong the East and the West. He guides whom He pleases to the right path".¹⁴⁹

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّهُمْ عَن قِبَلِهِمُ الَّذِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهِمْ قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٤٣﴾

^aSee 2 : 116.

149. Important Words :

قِبَلِهِمْ (their Qibla). The word قِبْلَة is derived from قَبَلَ. They say قَبَلَ عَلَى الشَّيْءِ i.e. he began the thing and stuck to it. قَبَلَ الْمَكَانَ means, he came facing the house. أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ means, he advanced facing him. أَقْبَلَ فَلَانَا الشَّيْءَ means, he put the thing before such a one or in front of him. قِبْلَة means: (1) direction; (2) direction to which a man turns while praying; (3) anything which one faces; (4) the Ka'ba at Mecca to which Muslims turn their faces when praying (Agrab).

Commentary :

In the preceding verses the Quran spoke of the people that have gone before, at the same time hinting at the difference between their deeds and those of the Muslims. In the present verse it introduces a subject in which the Muslims differ from other People of the Book i.e. the subject of قِبْلَة (Qibla).

It is a usual practice with the Quran that it does not abruptly give any new commandment such as might appear hard to men. It

generally begins by preparing the ground for the acceptance of such commandment by giving arguments in its favour and answering some objections that might possibly arise against it. See also 2 : 184, 185.

Similar is the case here. As the commandment regarding the change of Qibla was likely to prove a stumbling block for some people, so the ground is prepared by making a general observation to the effect that the selection of a particular direction does not really matter. What matters is the spirit of obedience to God on the one hand and unity among the Faithful on the other. The clause, *To Allah belong the East and the West*, signifies that the selection of the East or the West is not of much importance, the real object being God only. The selection of a particular direction is primarily meant for the purpose of unity among the Faithful. But the direction must also be good, and God was now going to choose a good direction for the Muslims and the objections of the people would prove their own folly.

144. And thus have ^aWe made you an exalted nation, ^bthat you may be guardians over men, and the Messenger of God may be a guardian over you. And We did not appoint the Qibla which thou didst follow, except that We might know him who follows the Messenger of God from him who turns upon his heels. And this is indeed hard, except for those whom Allah has guided. And it does not behove Allah to let your faith go in vain; surely, Allah is Compassionate and Merciful to the people.¹⁵⁰

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى
النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا
الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ
مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا
عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ إِيْمَانَكُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَعَرُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٤﴾

a3 : 111.

b22 : 79.

150. Important Words:

وسطا (exalted) is derived from وسط meaning, he stood in between two things. وسط في حسيبه (wasata) or وسط (wasuṭa) means, he was or became good and noble. الوسط means: (1) occupying the middle position or taking the middle course; (2) good and exalted in rank (Aqrah). That the word وسط is used here in the sense of good and exalted, is clear from 3:111 where Muslims are called the best people.

لنعلم (that We might know) signifies that We may make known or distinguish. In fact, God being Omniscient knows all things; so He does not stand in need of knowing a thing because everything is already known to Him. The word has been used elsewhere also in this sense (33:51). The expression من (from him who) occurring after it also shows that the word is used here in the sense of distinguishing or making known to the people.

Commentary:

The clause, *and thus have We made you an exalted nation*, refers to, and is connected with, the concluding clause of the preceding verse i.e. *He guides whom He pleases to the right path*. God means to say that whatever guidance

He sends down to the Muslims is for their own good and it is through His guidance that they have been made an exalted nation. So in the matter of the Qibla, too, they should be prepared to accept His guidance which is meant for their own good. This will make them "guardians over men" and the Messenger of God a "guardian over the Muslims."

Muslims are told that, as decreed by God, they are to become the leaders of men and win the pleasure of God by their good deeds and that on that account they will naturally become recipients of God's special favours, with the result that other people will be forced to the conclusion that the religion which they follow is the true religion. In this way will Muslims bear witness to the truth of Islam, just as the Holy Prophet was a witness of its truth for them.

Another meaning of the clause, *that you may be guardians over men*, is that each generation of Muslims should guard and watch over the next generation. Being the best of people, it is incumbent upon them to be always on their guard against falling away from the high standard of life expected of them, and to see that each succeeding generation also follows

the path pursued by those who enjoyed the ennobling company of the Holy Prophet. Thus the Holy Prophet was to be a guardian over his immediate followers, while they in turn were to be guardians over their successors, and so on.

Taking the particle *عل* (over) in the clause under discussion to mean "against" and the word *شاهد* (guardian) to mean "witness", which it often does, the clause would mean "that you may be witnesses against men and the Holy Prophet may be a witness against you," i.e., the Holy Prophet would serve as a mirror for the Muslims by looking into which they would be able to see their own shortcomings, while the lives of true Muslims would serve as a model for other people who, by comparing their lives with those of true Muslims, would see and realize their own defects and correct them accordingly. This state of affairs could be brought about only if Muslims faithfully followed all the behests of God including the one regarding *Qibla*, which was important as a rallying-point for the new community.

It may be noted here that, as hinted in the words, *and We did not appoint the Qibla which thou didst follow*, the Holy Prophet had adopted the Temple at Jerusalem as his *Qibla* by God's command; but as it was meant by God to be only a temporary *Qibla*, and was to be subsequently replaced by the Ka'ba which was to be the Islamic *Qibla* for all time, the command with regard to the temporary *Qibla* was not included in the Quran. This shows that all such commandments as possessed temporary application were not included in the Quran; only those were included which were of a permanent nature. Hence the theory that the Quran contains some verses that now stand abrogated is quite unfounded.

The Arabs were greatly attached to the Ka'ba, the ancient house of worship at Mecca.

It was their national Temple which had come down to them from the days of Abraham. It, therefore, proved a severe trial for them when they were asked at the very inception of Islam at Mecca to abandon the Ka'ba in favour of the Temple at Jerusalem which was the *Qibla* of the People of the Book. And later on at Medina the change of the *Qibla* from the Temple at Jerusalem to the Ka'ba proved a great trial for both Jews and Christians. It was very hard for them to abandon their *Qibla* for a rival temple which had been held sacred by the pagan Arabs. Thus God provided a trial for both the People of the Book and the idolaters of Mecca.

The Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem was not adopted as *Qibla* by the Holy Prophet to conciliate the Jewish population of Medina, as is wrongly supposed by Sale and other Christian critics, because it was not at Medina that this Temple was adopted as the *Qibla*. It had already been the *Qibla* of the Muslims at Mecca where there was no Jewish or Christian population to placate (Bukhārī & Jarīr). If, by appointing a *Qibla*, the Holy Prophet had intended to win over a people, the natural course would have been to appoint the Ka'ba as a *Qibla* while at Mecca and turn round to the Temple of Jerusalem at Medina. But what actually happened was quite the reverse. Moreover, the Quran expressly says that the adoption of neither of the *Qiblas* was meant to win over any people to Islam, but was intended only as a trial to distinguish the true believers from those not true.

The words, *it does not behove Allah to let your faith go in vain*, have a twofold meaning: (1) that this change of *Qibla* is in no way calculated adversely to affect the faith of Muslims but would actually strengthen it; (2) that if Muslims were not directed to turn to the Ka'ba, they would not inherit the blessings resulting from the prayers of Abraham offered at the time of its building (2: 130). It was

145. Verily, We see thee turning thy face often to heaven; surely, then, will We make thee turn to the Qibla which thou likest. "So, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it. And they to whom the Book has been given know that this is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not unmindful of what they do."¹⁵¹

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ
قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۚ وَإِنَّ
الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ
وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

^{a2}: 150, 151.

impossible that the Companions of the Holy Prophet who had displayed such steadfast loyalty and devotion to their noble ideals should not have been made heirs to the blessings contained in Abraham's prayers with which the Promised Prophet was to be so closely associated. The faith of Muslims would, as it were, go in vain if they remained detached from the Ka'ba and did not inherit its blessings.

151. Important Words:

قد (verily) means, already; sometimes; often; verily, etc. (Lane).

تقلب (turning) is derived from قلب. They say قلب الشيء i.e. (1) he made the thing change direction; (2) he turned it about so that its face and back changed directions; (3) he turned it upside down; (4) he turned it inside out; (5) he changed its condition. The word قلب (qallaba) gives almost the same meaning but with greater intensification. قلب الشيء means, the thing turned over and over, doing so much and repeatedly (Aqrab). The expression قلب وجهك would therefore mean, turning thy face with eagerness and anxiety to receive an order.

فلنولينك (We will make thee turn) is derived from ولي (wallā) which again is derived from ولي (waliya). The expression ولا gives two distinct meanings: (1) he made him ruler or master or guardian of it; (2) he made it change

direction or he made it turn towards a thing or away from it as the case may be (Aqrab).

الحرام (Sacred) is derived from حرم which means, it was or became forbidden, prohibited or unlawful whether from sanctity or owing to its being injurious. حرمه الشيء means, he denied or refused him the thing. Thus حرام means: (1) forbidden and unlawful; (2) sacred and inviolable (Aqrab). المسجد الحرام signifies, the Sacred Mosque at Mecca i.e. the Ka'ba.

Commentary:

While at Mecca, the Holy Prophet had orders to turn his face in Prayers towards the sacred Temple at Jerusalem. The Prophet, of course, obeyed the divine behest; but, as in his heart of hearts he desired the Ka'ba to be his Qibla and had a sort of intuition that eventually he would be ordered to turn his face towards it, he generally tried to choose such a place for worship where he could keep both the sacred Temple at Jerusalem and the Sacred Mosque of Mecca before him. When, however, the Holy Prophet emigrated to Medina, it became impossible for him to turn his face to both the places at one and the same time, and in compliance with divine command he was forced to turn his face to the Temple at Jerusalem alone. With this change the inner desire of the Holy Prophet naturally became intensified, and though, out of deference to

God's command, he did not actually pray for the change, yet he anxiously and eagerly looked towards heaven for an order to that effect. The clause, *verily We see thee turning thy face often to heaven*, is therefore highly eulogistic of the Prophet, inasmuch as it indicates (1) that the Holy Prophet had such great insight into spiritual matters that in spite of the interim command from God he knew that sooner or later the order for turning the face towards the Ka'ba would come; (2) that despite his great desire that the Ka'ba should be appointed as *Qibla*, the Holy Prophet had such extraordinary respect for his Lord's command that he refrained from even praying to that effect; (3) that God the Almighty had such great love for His Messenger that He most graciously refers to his turning his face towards heaven and expedites the command about the change of *Qibla*, lovingly adding, *We will make thee turn to the Qibla which thou likest*; and (4) that God had such great regard for the wish of the Prophet that He not only ordered him to turn his face towards the *Qibla* of his liking but at the same time hinted that He would soon make him master and guardian of it; for, as explained under Important Words, the expression *نولينك* also means, "We will make thee master or guardian." Truly did 'Ā'isha say to her illustrious husband, "I see that God hastens to fulfil your wishes" (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*).

After the above introduction follows the commandment about the change of *Qibla* in the words, *So turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it*. This commandment was given after the Holy Prophet had emigrated to Medina and had stayed there for about sixteen months. The words "Sacred Mosque" do not merely stand for the Ka'ba but also provide an argument in favour of the change ordered. The Mosque was sacred and full of blessings and would prove a sanctuary for the Faithful. The

words, *wherever you be, turn your faces towards it*, have been added with a threefold purpose: (1) to make it clear that the order was not meant for the people of Medina only but for all Muslims wherever they might be; (2) to point to the fact that one of the reasons underlying the order relating to the *Qibla* was to bring about unity and uniformity among all Muslims, wherever they might be; and (3) to hint that the commandment did not apply to the Holy Prophet only but extended to all Muslims, for whereas, in the preceding clause the Quran says, *turn thy face*, in the clause under comment it says, *turn your faces*.

The words, *They to whom the Book has been given know that this is the truth from their Lord*, mean that Jews and Christians were convinced on the basis of prophecies found in their scriptures having special reference to the Ka'ba and the Holy Prophet (Isa. 45: 13, 14; John 4: 21; Deut. 33: 2; Gen. 21: 21) that the commandment about the change of the *Qibla* from the Temple at Jerusalem to the Ka'ba at Mecca was truly from God. Mecca lies in what is known as the Desert of Faran or Paran mentioned in some of the above-mentioned verses of the Bible, and therefore the Jews knew that the prophecies contained in them applied to the Ka'ba and the Holy Prophet.

It may be noted here that, though in ordinary circumstances, the Muslims are enjoined to turn their faces to the Ka'ba when saying their Prayers, yet as direction is of secondary importance, Islam ordains that, if in special circumstances, it becomes difficult for a man to turn his face to the Ka'ba or to keep it so turned, he can say his Prayers in any direction that may be convenient. For instance, when a man does not know in which direction the Ka'ba lies, while travelling at night in a Railway train or on the back of an animal, etc., he can pray facing any direction. Similarly, a sick

146. And even if thou shouldst bring every Sign to those who have been given the Book, "they would never follow thy Qibla; nor wouldst thou follow their Qibla; nor would some of them follow the Qibla of others. ^bAnd if thou shouldst follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, then thou shalt surely be of the transgressors.¹⁵²

وَلَيْنُ آتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَتَّبِعُوا
قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ
قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ وَلَيْنُ آتَيْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا
جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

^a109:3, 7. ^b6:57; 13:38.

man lying in bed may pray in a lying posture facing any direction that he may find convenient.

152. Commentary:

This verse points to the hostility of Jews and Christians not only to Islam but also to one another. The Jews had Jerusalem as their *Qibla* (See I. Kings 8:22-30; Dan. 6:10; Ps. 5:7; Jonah, 2:4) while the Samaritans, a disowned section of the Jews, who also followed the Mosaic Law, had adopted a certain mountain in Palestine, named Gerizim, as their *Qibla* (John, 4:20 and Commentary on the New Testament by Right Rev. W. Walsham How, D.D., published by Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, under this verse). As regards the early Christians, they followed the *Qibla* of the Jews (Acts 3:1; Enc. Brit., 14th edition, v. 676; Jew. Enc. vi. 53) but we learn from authentic sources that when a party of the Christians of Najran paid a visit to Medina to have a discussion with the Holy Prophet on some doctrinal point, they worshipped in the Holy Prophet's mosque at Medina with their faces turned to the East (Zurqānī, iv. 41). Thus the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Christians followed different *Qiblas* owing to their mutual jealousy and enmity. In these circumstances it was vain to expect them to

follow the *Qibla* of the Muslims, and when obsolete faiths refused to follow the true *Qibla*, how could a true believer follow a *Qibla* that had become obsolete.

The concluding clause speaks of the practice of the People of the Book as vain "desires," not because they were not originally based on revelation but because they were opposed to the new revelation that had appointed the Ka'ba as *Qibla*. He who insists on sticking to an order that is no longer in force really follows naught but his own desire.

The words, *then thou shalt surely be of the transgressors*, do not evidently refer to the Holy Prophet, because, (1) he could in no circumstances go against Allah's commandment, and (2) the foregoing part of this very verse says about him, *nor wouldst thou follow their Qibla*, and (3) it is clearly stated in the preceding verse that he loved to turn his face towards the Ka'ba and eagerly awaited a divine commandment to that effect. It is, therefore, unthinkable that the Prophet could forsake the *Qibla* of his own liking. The words obviously refer, and the rules of the Arabic language as well as the usage of the Quran bear out this reference, either to the reader in general or to every individual Muslim who followed the Holy Prophet.

147. "Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it even as they recognize their sons, but surely some of them ^bconceal the truth knowingly.¹⁵³ **الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾**

148. "It is the truth from thy Lord ; be not therefore of those who doubt.¹⁵⁴ **الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُتَرَدِّينَ ﴿١٥٤﴾**

R. 18 149. And every one has a goal which dominates him; ^avie, then, with one another in good works. Wherever you be, Allah will bring you all together. Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.¹⁵⁵ **وَلِكُلٍّ وِجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّئُهَا فَاسْتَغِيظُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ؕ آيِنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾**

^a6:21. ^b2:175; 5:16; 6:92. ^c3:61; 6:115; 10:95. ^d3:134; 5:49; 35:33; 57:22.

153. Important Words:

يعرفون (recognize) is derived from عرف which means, he knew or recognized or perceived a thing. Though the word is also used of such knowledge as is derived through the senses, it is particularly used of such knowledge as is obtained by thinking and meditating (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The pronoun *hū* (him or it) occurring in the clause "recognize him or it" may be taken as referring either to the change of *Qibla* or to the Holy Prophet. The clause means that the People of the Book know on the basis of the prophecies found in their scriptures that a Prophet would appear among the Arabs and that he would be connected with the Ka'ba.

The sentence, *some of them conceal the truth knowingly*, refers to the learned men of the Jews who were well versed in their scriptures and knew the prophecies relating to the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam but deliberately suppressed those prophecies in order to conceal them from the people.

154. Important Words:

الحق (truth) means: (1) a truth; (2) a thing

foreordained by God; (3) an established fact (4) a right; (5) certainty and conviction (Aqrab).

المتريين (those in doubt) is the plural of مترى which is derived from امرى which again is derived from مرى. They say مرى حقه i.e. he contested or refused his right. امرى means: (1) he doubted; (2) he contested or raised objections. Thus مترى means: (1) those who doubt; (2) those who contest and raise objections (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse refers to the great future of Islam. The revelation sent down to the Holy Prophet had come to stay and all obstacles that stood in its way were doomed to disappear. This is ordained by God, the Controller of man's destiny, and is as good as an established fact. Therefore, O reader, do not waste your energies in doubting or disputing a thing that must prevail.

155. Important Words:

وجهة (goal) is derived from وجه meaning, the face. وجهه therefore, means: (1) a direction to

which one turns one's face ; (2) a goal or an object (Aqrab).

استبقوا (vie with one another) is formed from استبق which is derived from سبق which means, he went ahead of him and left him behind ; he outstripped him ; he excelled him in some quality. استبق means: (1) he tried to go ahead of others so as to reach the goal first ; (2) he hastened and employed his full powers to attain or reach an object (Aqrab & Lane).

خيرات (good works) is the plural of خيرة which means: (1) anything excessively good ; (2) any thing superior to other things (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This short verse contains in a few words a mighty lesson as to how the Muslims can achieve success in life. First, they should fix for themselves a goal and that goal should not be the attainment of a particular good but of every good. Nay, they should aspire for more than that. They should try to attain such things as are exceedingly good and superior to others. Again, they should not seek these things in a careless and haphazard manner but should hasten towards them, vying with one another in a spirit of healthy emulation to reach the goal before others.

The expression استبقوا (vie with one another) used here in the plural form also points to the fact that in this race for all that is good Muslims should try to help those who are weak and assist them in the attainment of virtue. A true Muslim should not only himself strive after virtue but should also invite others to attain to the same stage of virtue which he himself has attained. The spiritual race referred to in the verse thus becomes a most peculiar race in which the competitors not only vie with one another but also look

towards their comrades and help such of them as may stumble on their way or be lax in other respects.

The clause, *Wherever you be, Allah will bring you all together*, means that a Muslim should not think of vying with only those who immediately surround him and thus be satisfied by outstripping them, but should also remember the fact that in far-off places there may be those who are running very fast—faster than those who surround him—and as God will judge all together, a Muslim should not be unmindful of the unknown competitors but should try to spend his energies to the fullest possible extent so that he may truly top the list.

The clause is capable of yet another interpretation. It is human nature that when a man comes to know that the result of his works would be announced publicly, he strives all the harder to outdo others in the discharge of his duties. Hence, God calls upon Muslims to bear in mind that on a certain day they will be gathered together with the peoples of all ages and the results of their deeds will be announced before that huge assemblage ; so they should exert themselves accordingly.

The clause, *Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills*, is intended to remind Muslims that there is no limit to man's spiritual progress and development. A man can rise to any stage of progress and yet the All-Powerful God can help and guide him to the attainment of a still higher stage.

The words هو موليا (which dominates him) literally mean, which he makes dominant over him, i.e., a man first sets up an objective and then makes it a dominating factor in his life. The expression هو موليا also means, to which he turns his face. In both these senses the underlying idea is that of engrossment and devotion.

150. And from wheresoever thou comest forth, ^aturn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque ; for that is indeed the truth from thy Lord. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.¹⁵⁶

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ
عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

151. And ^bfrom wheresoever thou comest forth, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque ; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it that people may have no argument against you, except those who are unjust—^cso fear them not, but fear Me—and ^dthat I may perfect My favour upon you ; and that you may be rightly guided.¹⁵⁷

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ
لئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلِأَتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي
عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

^aSee 2 : 145. ^b2 : 145, 150. ^c5 : 4. ^d5 : 4 ; 12 : 7.

156. Important Words :

خرج (thou comest forth) is from which means: (1) he came forth ; (2) he went forth ; (3) he came forth or went forth for a battle (Aqrah).

Commentary :

Now when the Ka'ba had been appointed the *Qibla* of Muslims, it became necessary that Mecca should come under their control. The verse under comment suitably refers to that matter. Muslims are bidden henceforward to direct all their energies to the conquest of Mecca. In all his campaigns, the Holy Prophet was commanded to keep in view the taking of Mecca, which had now become the centre of Islam. This is borne out by the expression خرج (thou comest forth) which also means "thou goest forth for a battle." The word خرج "thou comest forth or goest forth" has thus nothing to do with the turning of the face to the Ka'ba at the time of Prayers ; for Prayers are not performed walking. Obviously the commandment cannot mean that one

should, while walking, pray with one's face turned toward the Ka'ba.

The words, *for that is indeed the truth from thy Lord*, evidently imply that Mecca was sure to fall one day into the hands of the Holy Prophet. As considering the then helpless condition of the Muslims, such an achievement appeared to be almost impossible, so God gave His Messenger the assurance that the promise was a true one and its fulfilment was absolutely certain.

The expression, *and Allah is not unmindful of what you do*, provides a reason for the above promise. God was well aware of the deeds of the Muslims, knowing full well how they were striving to win His favour ; so He could not let their labours go unrewarded. Just as He had established their connection with the Ka'ba spiritually, so would He make them its masters physically.

157. Commentary :

The singular person in خرج (thou comest forth) is used to emphasize the fact that the conquest

of Mecca was the personal responsibility of the Holy Prophet. If he could persuade others to help him, well and good; if not, he alone stood responsible before God—a mighty responsibility indeed which also strikes at the very root of the objection that Islam waited for a declaration of the defensive war till it was strong enough to hit back.

The plural person in *حيث ما كنتم* (wherever you be) is used so as to include the Muslims of all places. Next to the Holy Prophet, they are also commanded to keep the same object in view i.e. the conquest of Mecca. This verse and the preceding one should afford no ground for inferring that Islam bids its followers to wage an aggressive war. For, as amply borne out by history, by the time these verses were revealed, war had already commenced with the Meccans and it was they that had forced it upon the unwilling Muslims.

The words, *that people may have no argument against you*, mean that if the Muslims failed to conquer Mecca, the objection would quite legitimately be raised by the enemies of Islam that the Holy Prophet had not fulfilled the prayer of Abraham, contained in 2:130, and therefore, could not claim to be the Promised Prophet. Moreover, the House to which the Muslims were commanded to turn their faces at Prayers was, while under the control of the heathen Meccans, full of idols. If the idols had continued to remain in the Ka'ba, the Muslims might have been accused of worshipping idols. This objection could be effectively answered, if the Holy House, which had been originally dedicated to the worship of One God, had been cleared of idols. Hence the commandment to substitute the Ka'ba for the Temple at Jerusalem as *Qibla* was naturally followed by the injunction about the conquest of Mecca.

It may be added here that the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims had also been predicted in the Quran in 28:86, and 17:81.

The prophecy contained in Deut. 33:2 was also fulfilled when the Holy Prophet entered Mecca as a conqueror at the head of ten thousand Muslims.

The clause, *that I may perfect My favour upon you*, provides yet another argument in favour of the commandment relating to the conquest of Mecca. God means to say that with the taking of Mecca God's favour on the Muslims would begin to be perfected; for it would mean the subjugation of all Arabia and the influx of thousands of men into the fold of Islam. The result amply justified the prophecy; for the conquest of Mecca was rapidly followed by the conversion to Islam of thousands of Arabs. Most of the Arabs, at heart victims of the beauty of Islam, had deferred their acceptance of the new faith till the issue of the struggle between Muslims and Meccans had been finally settled, and now they virtually came forward in "troops" to join it.

Another reason why the conquest of Mecca was followed by a general influx of Arabs into Islam was that although the Arabs followed no revealed Book, yet the prophecy of Abraham that Mecca would not be conquered by the followers of any false Prophet, and any people attempting it would meet with destruction was well known to them. They had only recently seen a remarkable illustration of the fulfilment of this prophecy in the miraculous destruction of the Abyssinian invader Abraha and his powerful army. Thus when Mecca fell into the hands of the Holy Prophet, they were at once convinced of his truth and thousands of them hastened to embrace Islam.

In this and the preceding verses (vv. 145 and 150), the command to turn to the Ka'ba has been mentioned thrice. This is not a repetition; for the first command i.e. in v. 145 pertains to the change of the *Qibla*, while the second and the third i.e. in vv. 150, 151 refer to the conquest of Mecca. But here, too, there is truly speaking no repetition, for the command

152. Even as "We have sent to you a Messenger from among yourselves who recites Our signs to you, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and Wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know."¹⁵²

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا
وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ
مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

^aSee 2 : 130.

about the conquest of Mecca contained in each of these two verses serves a different purpose. In v. 150 Muslims are asked to turn their attention to the conquest of Mecca because God wished them to do so. So they were in duty bound to carry it out undeterred by any fear of failure; whereas in the verse under comment i.e. v. 151 the benefits which were to accrue to Muslims on their carrying out the command relating to the conquest of Mecca have been mentioned. Those benefits briefly are: (1) refutation of the objections and criticism of the enemy; (2) conversion to Islam of hundreds of thousands of Arabs, including the kith and kin of the Muslims; and (3) enlargement of the political power of Islam.

158. Commentary:

The word *ك* meaning "even as" has been used to connect this verse with the preceding one by pointing out that God will bestow upon the believers the favours mentioned in the preceding verse even as, or just as, He has favoured them with a Prophet.

With a slight change in the arrangement of the words this verse refers to the work of the Holy Prophet in exactly the same words in which Abraham prayed to God about the appearance of a Prophet among the Meccans (2:130), which clearly shows that Abraham's prayer had found fulfilment in the person of the Holy Prophet. The change in arrangement is

this, that while recounting the favours of God this verse, unlike verse 2:130, mentions the work of purification before that of the teaching of the Book and Wisdom, because though in theory the teaching of the Book may come first, in actual practice purification is more important than the teaching of the Book and Wisdom; for whereas the former is the end, the latter is only the means to that end.

Another difference between this verse and 2:130 is that whereas the latter ends with the words, *Thou art the Mighty, the Wise*, the former concludes with the words, *And (he) teaches you that which you did not know*. The reason for this change is not far to seek. Abraham had used the words, *Surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise*, in his prayer, meaning that God being Mighty, it was not difficult for Him to accept his prayer; and as He was also Wise, He knew best what the requirements of his posterity would be. But when God spoke of the actual fulfilment of this prayer, it was quite unnecessary to repeat these words. So in place of the above-quoted words, the words, *(he) teaches you that which you did not know*, have been added to signify: *firstly*, that, while accepting the prayer God had granted even more than Abraham had prayed for; and *secondly*, that the teachings of the Holy Prophet were far in advance of the teachings of the former Prophets and were such as the world really needed but had not so far known.

153. Therefore "remember Me, I will remember you ; and be thankful to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me.¹⁵⁹

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٩﴾

9 154. O ye who believe, ^bseek help with patience and prayer ; surely, Allah is with the steadfast.¹⁶⁰

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

^a2 : 204 ; 8 : 46 ; 62 : 11. ^bSee 2 : 46.

159. Important Words :

فَاذْكُرُونِي اذْكُرْكُمْ (so remember Me, I will remember you). The verb ذكركم means, he remembered him ; he bore it or him in mind ; he spoke or talked of him. ذكرا لله means, he remembered God ; he glorified God and extolled His greatness ; he prayed to Him or offered prayers to Him. ذكركم الله means, God bestowed His favours on him ; He called him to His presence to do him honour. The noun ذكر means, remembrance ; mentioning or speaking of ; eminence ; honour ; good name (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lane).

اشكروا (render thanks) is from شكر i.e. he thanked ; he was grateful. شكرا لله means, he acknowledged the beneficence of God, rendering Him obedience and abstaining from disobedience (Lane).

Commentary :

Remembrance of God on the part of man means, to remember Him with love and devotion, to carry out His behests, to bear in mind His attributes, to glorify Him and offer prayers to Him ; and remembrance of man on the part of God signifies, God's drawing him near to Himself, bestowing favours on him and making provision for his welfare. Thus we are here told that if we seek nearness to God, He will certainly draw us near to Himself. According to yet another meaning of the word ذكر i.e. honour and eminence, the verse would mean that if the Muslims will

remember God, He will make them honoured and eminent in the world.

The expression, *remember Me, I will remember you*, can also mean that one who truly loves God will eventually attract the love of God. Remembrance is really born of love and is in a way synonymous with it. Indeed, nobody can remember an object more than a lover does the object of his love.

160. Important Words :

صبر (patience) means : (1) to be steadfast and constant in something ; (2) to endure afflictions with fortitude and without complaint or murmur ; (3) to hold fast to the Divine Law and the dictates of reason ; (4) to refrain from doing what the Divine Law and reason forbid (Mufradāt).

Commentary :

The verse contains a golden principle of success. *Firstly*, a man should be constant in his endeavours, never relaxing his efforts and never losing heart, at the same time avoiding what is harmful and sticking fast to all that is good. *Secondly*, he should pray to God for success ; for He alone is the source of all good.

The word صبر (patience) precedes the word صلو (prayer) in the verse to emphasize the importance of observing the laws of God which are sometimes flouted in ignorance. Ordinarily a prayer can be effective only when it is accompanied by the use of all the necessary means created

155. And "say not of those who are killed in the cause of Allah that they are dead ; nay, they are living ; only you perceive not.¹⁶¹

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ بَلْ
أَحْيَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ٥٤

3 : 170.

by God for the attainment of an object. This fact, however, does not minimize the importance of prayer, nor does it impose any limit on the omnipotence of God. If God so wills it, prayer can work wonders even where all earthly means fail.

Islam does not teach utter and blind dependence on material means. Prayer indeed is the essence of Islam. Man is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, and if he does not seek divine guidance and assistance, he can neither see all good nor can he secure it for himself.

As explained under Important Words, the word صبر also signifies, enduring afflictions with fortitude and without complaint and murmur. In this sense the verse would mean that, the present being the time of war and bloodshed, Muslims should bear these hardships with perfect patience and fortitude and that if they did so, God would succour them in their trials.

The concluding portion of the verse *i.e.* *Allah is with the steadfast*, seems to confine itself to صبر only, excluding the element of الصلاة. But it is not so really, for صبر in its wider sense includes prayer also. What is meant is this, that Allah is with those who are steadfast in their endeavours as well as steadfast in their prayers. The principle provides a wonderful key to success.

161. Important Words :

أحيا (living) is the plural of حي which, among other things, means: (1) one whose life work does not go in vain ; (2) one whose death is avenged. A well-known pre-Islamic poet, Hārith ibn Hīlliza, author of the seventh *Mu'allāqa*, says :

ان نبشتم ما بين ملحۃ فالصا قب فيها الاموات والاحياء
i.e. If you dig the graves between *Milḥa* and *Ṣāqib*, you will find some who are dead, and others who are living. In this couplet by the "living," the poet means such persons as were slain in battle but whose blood was avenged, and by the "dead" he means those whose blood was not avenged.

Commentary :

The teaching about صبر (steadfastness) naturally brings in the question of sacrifices that Muslims were making in the cause of Islam. Therefore the Quran suitably refers here to the subject of martyrs. Death is not the end of life, and in this respect believers and unbelievers stand on the same footing and the martyrs too enjoy no distinction. Nor would it be wrong to speak of them as dead in the ordinary sense of the word. But the word احياء (living) has been used here about martyrs in a special sense.

As explained under Important Words above, the word حي (living) is also applied to him whose work, or, more properly speaking, the cause for which he lays down his life, does not come to an end with his death. The verse, therefore, points out that those who lay down their lives for Islam should not be regarded as dead, because the cause for which they give their lives still stands and is all the more strongly upheld by others who take their places.

Again, according to the Arabic idiom, حي (living) is also one whose blood is avenged. The verse, therefore, implies that as full satisfaction is taken for the blood of Muslims

156. And "We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient."¹⁶²

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ
الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

“3 : 187.

killed in the way of God, not only in the sense that far more non-Muslims join the fold of Islam than those killed in the wars but also in the sense that the number of non-Muslims killed is much larger than those killed among the Muslims, therefore Muslim martyrs are not really dead.

The word *حي* (living) may possess yet another significance. As a rule, life after death does not fully begin immediately after death. The soul of man continues in a state of torpor for some time after death. This period varies with different persons according to the degree of their spiritual purity. As martyrs sacrifice their lives for the sake of God, their souls do not remain long in torpor but are quickly revived into a new life. This is one of the reasons why martyrs are called living, not dead.

The verse comprises a great psychological truth which is calculated to exercise immense influence on the life and progress of a people. A community that does not duly honour those of its members who lay down their lives for the cause for which the community stands sows the seed of its own ruin. Again, a community which does not arrange to remove the fear of death from the hearts of its members seals its own fate. The verse under comment provides an effective safeguard against both these dangers.

162. Important Words:

لَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ (and We will try you). *لَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ* is derived from *بَلَّ* which has two meanings: (1) learning the state or condition of a person by means of a trial or test whether through favours or afflictions; (2) manifesting the goodness or

badness of an object by a similar means. *بَلَّ* also means, a trial or a test imposed on a person with a view to learning or manifesting his true condition (Aqrab & Lane). See also 2 : 50.

Commentary:

This verse comes as a fitting sequel to the preceding one. Muslims should be prepared not only to lay down their lives in the cause of Islam but also to suffer diverse forms of affliction which will be imposed on them as a trial. According to the Quran, God has generally two purposes in "proving" men. He "proves" or tries those who have attained to a high stage of spiritual advancement, as was the case with Abraham (2 : 125); and He also tries those who have not yet attained to that stage (29:3). His object in "proving" the former is to bring them to the notice of the people and make them shine as models of virtue and purity; while in the case of the latter, the purpose is to make them acquainted with their own weaknesses so that they may try to improve their condition. Though misfortunes and afflictions involve a certain amount of pain, they also afford a good opportunity for spiritual reformation and purification. Thus afflictions and calamities have their use. They serve to strengthen the faith. Those who remain steadfast under trials, despite afflictions, become entitled to a great reward from God. A trial also sometimes becomes a means of exposing the weakness of a person and of his downfall; for after all it is an examination which, though held with the object of promoting a student, sometimes results in his failure. See 7 : 177.

157. Who, "when a misfortune overtakes them, say, 'Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.'"¹⁶³

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا
إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ط

^a22:36. ^b7:126 ; 26:51.

The tests by means of which God intended to "prove" the Faithful are, as stated in this verse: (1) Fear *i.e.* a state or condition in which fear will dominate them, the enemy surrounding them with diverse dangers. (2) Hunger *i.e.* shortage of food; the enemy will not only cut off their means of communication but will also completely boycott them, leaving them stranded without food or provision. The word "hunger" may also signify a state of famine. (3) Loss of wealth and property. The enemy will raid Muslims repeatedly and inflict heavy losses on them. (4) Loss of lives *i.e.* the cruel war inflicted on them by the enemy will also cause loss of life. (5) Loss of fruits. The action of the enemy will not be confined to inflicting loss of lives and property only but will extend to inflicting loss of crops as well. As *ثمرة* (fruit) also means the fruit of one's labour or the profit accruing to a man from any source, loss of fruits also signifies disorganization of trade and industry.

All these losses coming together constituted indeed a very heavy burden; but they were borne by the Muslims with such patience and fortitude as is unrivalled in all history. God tried them and found them truly patient.

163. Commentary :

This verse provides a true definition of the term *صابر* (a patient person) as mentioned in the concluding portion of the preceding verse. A *صابر* who is vouchsafed glad tidings in the foregoing verse is one who bears all sorts of calamities and afflictions with complete restraint and fortitude, uttering no word of complaint or murmur but sincerely saying,

Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return. These words comprise a formula which every Muslim is directed to utter when he is afflicted with any misfortune relating to life, property, etc.

God is the Master of all we possess, including our own selves. If the Owner in His infinite wisdom deems fit to take away anything from us, we have no ground for complaint or murmur. We should indeed be grateful for what we receive from God, but there is no justification for murmuring at a loss, because we possess no inherent right to any gift.

The clause, *to Allah we belong*, also teaches us the great spiritual truth that we have no real connection with the things of this world and therefore the loss of such things should cause us no real grief. Similarly, the other part of the formula, *viz., and surely to Him shall we return*, also contains an equally grand principle. We come from God and will have to go back to Him, when we shall have to render an account of all our deeds. So every misfortune that befalls us should, instead of depressing us, spur us to make yet greater efforts to achieve still better results in life. Thus the formula contained in this verse is not a mere verbal incantation but a great counsel and a great warning. When a Muslim sincerely utters this formula on occasions of loss, grief or bereavement, its true import is bound to be deeply impressed upon his mind and to sustain him in his hours of trials and tribulations. Nay, it is calculated to do something more; it helps to strengthen his connection with his Maker and make Him the centre of all his thoughts and actions.

158. It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided.¹⁶⁴

أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ تُنَزَّلُ
أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

159. Surely, Al-Safā and Al-Marwa are among the "Signs of Allah." It is, therefore, no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House, or performs 'Umra, to go round the two. And whoso does good beyond what is obligatory, surely then, Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing.¹⁶⁵

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ
الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ
بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ
عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٩﴾

22 : 33.

164. Commentary :

This verse speaks of the great reward of those who prove themselves to be truly صابر or patient. It is, in fact, an explanation of the word, *glad tidings*, occurring in 2:156. Truly patient people who are steadfast in their connection with God and whom each and every affliction finds spiritually rising higher and higher will inherit three things: (1) blessings from their Lord; (2) His mercy; and (3) His guidance. God will bless them in every way, will cover them with His mercy and forgiveness and will look after them, providing guidance for them whenever they may need it. He will, as it were, become their friend and guardian, eager to come to their help on all occasions.

165. Important Words :

الصفا والمروة (Al-Safā and Al-Marwa) are the names of two hills near the Ka'ba in Mecca, the first-mentioned being the nearer of the two. Both Arabian history and the traditions of Islam connect these hills with the story of Hagar and Ishmael when Abraham left them near these hills under God's command. Ishmael was yet a child, and when the scanty provisions ran out and he was in a pitiable condition

for want of water, Hagar anxiously and repeatedly ran between these two hills in search of water and help, but none was found. When, however, she was in her seventh circuit, an angel of God called to her saying that God had brought forth a spring of water near her son and that she should go and look to it (Bukhārī, ch. on *Anbiyā*). Thus the hills of صفا (Safā) and مروة (Marwa) became شعائر الله i.e. Signs of God worthy of due honour and respect in the sight of every true believer. The Bible also makes mention of مروة in a somewhat changed form (Gen. 22 : 2; also Enc. Bib. under Moriah) in connection with the sacrifice of Abraham's son.

شعائر (Signs) is the plural of شعيرة which is derived from شعر meaning, he knew or he perceived. Thus شعيرة means: (1) anything by means of which another thing may be known; (2) a sign; (3) anything which is considered or is performed as a mark of submission to God; (4) the rites of Pilgrimage and practices pertaining thereto (Aqrab).

حج (is on pilgrimage to) means: (1) he sought a person or thing; (2) he went or repaired to a person or thing; (3) he went to a person again and again; (4) he visited a holy place; (5) he performed حج (Pilgrimage) to the Ka'ba;

(6) he overpowered a person in argument (Aqrab).

اعتمر (performs 'Umra) is derived from عمر which means, he occupied or tenanted a house; he worshipped God and prayed to Him. اعتمر means, he went to, or visited, a place. عمرة means, visiting a place; worshipping and praying to God; performing Lesser Pilgrimage in which some of the rites of حج are left out (Aqrab).

طوع (does beyond what is obligatory) is derived from طاع i.e. he obeyed; he did an act willingly and voluntarily. The infinitive الطوع means: (1) obedience; (2) doing an act willingly without its being obligatory on one. تطوع means, he performed an act with effort and volition. تطوع خيرا means, he performed a good act which was not obligatory on him (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

To a superficial observer the verse under comment dealing with the subject of Pilgrimage appears to have no connection with the preceding ones which deal with the subject of trials and sacrifices. But a deeper study will at once disclose a very close connection between the two. The preceding verses warned Muslims to be prepared for sacrifices and gave them the glad tidings that if they performed the required sacrifices willingly and patiently, God would bless them greatly and would show special mercy to them and would remember them with kindness and would provide guidance for them whenever needed. Now, in order to bring home to them the truth of this promise, He invites the attention of Muslims to the great sacrifice of Abraham near the site of Al-Şafā and Al-Marwa. Abraham obeyed His Lord and left his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael near these two hills of Mecca, which was then a most desolate tract. The seed was sown in a soil which was apparently the most barren of all soils, but how wonderfully it pros-

pered! God was a most loving and faithful God who so fondly remembered His servants, Abraham and Ishmael, even after the lapse of 2,500 years, and Muslims can expect the same love and the same fidelity from Him, if they too love and obey Him.

Şafā and Marwa, as explained under Important Words above, are two hills which stand as a memorial to Hagar's great patience and extraordinary loyalty to God on the one hand and to God's special treatment of her and her son on the other. A visit to these hills makes the pilgrim deeply impressed with the love, fidelity and power of God.

The words, *it is no sin for him*, should not be taken to mean that performing the circuit between Şafā and Marwa is only permissible and not obligatory. The expression is used simply to remove the aversion to such performance found among certain persons on the basis of the fact that heathen Arabs had placed two idols on these two hills (Muslim). God removed this erroneous notion by saying that it was no sin to perform the circuit between Şafā and Marwa, which on account of the great sacrifice of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael on the one hand and the resulting blessings of God on the other, had become شارات الله i.e. great Signs of God. That the performance of these circuits is obligatory in both حج and عمرة (the Greater and the Lesser Pilgrimage) is clear from the practice of the Holy Prophet and his injunctions to his followers (Bukhārī, ch. *Al-Hajj*).

The words, *whoso does good beyond what is obligatory*, do not refer to حج (Greater Pilgrimage), which under certain conditions is obligatory on each Muslim once in a lifetime, but to عمرة (Lesser Pilgrimage) which is not obligatory but simply supererogatory. The words may also be considered to refer to any additional حج or Pilgrimage which a Muslim may perform, after he has performed the one obligatory Pilgrimage.

160. Those who conceal what We have sent down of Signs and guidance after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, ^ait is these whom Allah curses ; and so curse them those who curse.¹⁶⁶

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ
اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّعُنُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

161. But ^bthey who repent and amend and openly declare *the truth*, it is these to whom I turn with forgiveness, and I am Oft-Returning with compassion and Merciful.¹⁶⁷

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ
عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦١﴾

^a2 : 175. ^b3 : 90 ; 4 : 147 ; 5 : 40 ; 24 : 6.

As this verse mentions the subject of Pilgrimage only secondarily, we are not giving here a note on the rites and philosophy of حج which will be discussed when we come to the relevant verses.

166. Important Words :

لَعَنَهُمْ (curses them). For the meaning of لعن see note on 2 : 89.

Commentary :

The present verse has been taken to apply either to Muslims or Jews. In the former case the verse would be taken as a warning to Muslims that they should ever be careful to preach the truth of Islam and should in no circumstances hide or neglect it but should ever be ready to proclaim it, however bitter the opposition. Failing this, they will not only not attain the nearness of God but will be cast away from Him. If applied to Jews, and that indeed is the right application, the connection with the preceding verse may be easily seen in the reference to Al-Şafā and Al-Marwa in that verse. It was at these places that Abraham left his wife Hagar, and his son, Ishmael, under God's command and it was here that, while building the Ka'ba, Abraham and Ishmael prayed to God for the appearance of a great Prophet among their

progeny. The Quran thus refers here to the Jews who were concealing the prophecies contained in their scriptures about the Holy Prophet. The Jews are warned that if they concealed the clear prophecies given to them about the Arabian Prophet, in spite of the fact that they have now been reminded of them through the Quran, God would cast them away, depriving them of His mercy and condemning them to punishment in Hell. They are further warned that as God is the Lord of the entire universe, His curse will not come alone but everything which is subservient to Him will then begin to curse them—angels, men, the elements, laws of nature and all.

167. Important Words :

أَصْلَحُوا (amend) is derived from صلح which means, he or it was or became good or virtuous or just or proper. أصْلَحَ means, he reformed him or he reformed himself or he amended. When أصْلَحَ is followed by the preposition بَيْنَ (between) as in أصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ it means, he brought about reconciliation between them (Aqrab).

Commentary :

God, not being vindictive, is ever ready to pardon those who repent and rectify their

162. Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, "on them shall be the curse of Allah and of angels and of men all together."¹⁶⁸

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

163. ^bThey shall remain under it. The punishment shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be granted respite.¹⁶⁹

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

^a3 : 88. ^b3 : 89.

mistakes. But repentance must be sincere and real. Mere verbal expression of regret is not sufficient. The evil-doer must try to make full amends for the wrong committed and should promise to bring about in himself a real change in future. It is only after a real change takes place in the sinner that forgiveness is promised to him. As to the Jews who concealed prophecies regarding the Holy Prophet, the verse lays down three conditions as a proof of real repentance. *Firstly*, they should declare their repentance and turn back from their wrong course. *Secondly*, they should make amends practically, not only by reforming themselves but also by trying to reform those who have been misled through them. *Thirdly*, they should openly declare the truth which they have been hiding regarding the prophecies in their scriptures. If they fulfilled these conditions, they would yet find God Forgiving and Merciful.

168. Commentary :

The word الناس (men) may either mean "all men" or "holy and virtuous men" i.e. those who deserve to be called "men" in the real sense of the word. This distinction is not arbitrary; for there is a class of men whom the Quran describes as "cattle or even worse" (7 : 180).

The cursing of the angels and the holy men means that as angels and holy men obey their

Lord and Master and never go against His wishes, they would naturally sever connections with the disbelievers—the Jews—when they see Him doing the same. The angels, one of whose works is to help good men and punish the wicked, will turn against them and all good men will also strive to bring their evil efforts to naught. They will find the entire forces of God ranged against them.

If the word الناس (men) be taken to refer to all men, then the clause would mean that all men being subordinate to God, He would so arrange that no people would be able to help them against His decree.

169. Important Words :

نظر (be granted respite) is formed from ينظرون which means, (1) he looked; (2) he granted respite. They say نظر فلانا الدين i.e. he granted him respite in respect of the payment of debt (Aqrah).

Commentary :

God is slow to punish but when the cup of the iniquities of a disbelieving people becomes full to the brim and all warning is lost upon them, then severe punishment overtakes them, and no further respite is granted; and as the punishment is primarily meant as a cure, it is of sufficiently long duration and persists till all vestige of spiritual disease is rooted out.

164. And "your God is One God ;
there is no God but He, the Gracious,
the Merciful.¹⁷⁰

وَالْهُكْمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ١٦٤

165. Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water which Allah sends down from the sky and quickens therewith the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth,—are indeed signs for the people who understand.¹⁷¹

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَ النَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ١٦٥

^a2:256 ; 16:23 ; 22:35 ; 37:5 ; 59:23, 24 ; 112:2. ^b3:191 ; 10:7 ; 30:23 ; 45:6.

170. Commentary :

As all sin springs from feebleness of faith, this verse fittingly refers to the unity of God, signifying that if people only believed in God's unity and refrained from setting up false gods, they would never digress from the right path. It must not, however, be understood that idol-worship consists in worshipping images only. Every man who loves any one other than God as he ought to love Him, or fears anyone as he ought to fear Him, or trusts in anyone as he ought to trust in Him, is really guilty of idol-worship and must suffer the consequences thereof. In fact, the principal and primary object of religion, is to establish the unity of God, and the Quran has dealt with this subject in a manner and to an extent which has no parallel in any other Book. Islam condemns both *شرك جلي* (manifest or visible idolatry) and *شرك خفي* (hidden or invisible idolatry) in the strongest of terms.

The verse may also signify that, with the advent of Islam, God, the Maker of heavens and

earth, no longer remains the God of this or that people only, but becomes the God of all peoples and all mankind. The word *الرحمن* (the Gracious or the Provider for all peoples) occurring at the end of the verse also points to the same truth. In this sense the verse would be considered to be particularly connected with 2:159 above which speaks of the *Safā* and the *Marwa* as the special Signs of Allah, serving as pointers to the mission of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

171. Important Words :

اختلاف (alternation) is derived from *خلف*. They say *خلفه* i.e. he or it was or became his or its successor. *خلف الرجل* means, he came after or remained after the man and stood in his place. *اختلفه* means, he followed him as his successor. *اختلفوا* means: (1) they came one after another by turn; (2) they differed or disagreed (*Aqrah*).

الفلک (ships) is derived from the verb *فلک* meaning, it became round or circular. *الفلک*

(*al-fulk*) means, a ship, or a boat, probably because it looks round and shapeless when seen at sea from a distance. The word is both singular and plural. *الفلک* (*al-falak*) means, the vault of heaven or the firmament in which the stars move. This is also probably owing to the apparently round shape of the sky (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lane).

دابة (beast) is the active participle from *دب* which means, he or it crept or crawled or walked slowly like an ant or a reptile or a child or a weak or sickly person. *دابة* means, all such animals or insects as creep or crawl or walk slowly (Aqrab). The word is used about all moving animals, whether big or small, whether walking on two legs or on four legs or creeping on the belly, etc. (24:46). It is also used about beasts used for riding or for carrying burden, like the horse, the mule, the donkey, etc. (Lane).

المسخر (pressed into service) is the passive participle from *سخر* *sakhkhara*. They say *سخره* *sakhkhara-hū* or *سخره* *sakhara-hū* (not *سخره* *sakhira* which gives a different meaning) i.e. (1) he employed him or imposed on him a task without compensation; (2) he subjugated him and made him subservient to himself. Thus *مسخر* is that who or which has been made subservient to another, being unable to free himself or itself from constraint (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse gives a twofold meaning, one literal and the other metaphorical. In the former sense, it supplies an argument in support of the existence of God referred to in the preceding verse. A careful study of the universe unfailingly points to a Creator on the one hand and to man being created with a definite object on the other. It also proves that, having created the world, God did not leave it alone but continues to watch over and control its affairs and is the First Cause of all change and every working in the universe. Heaven and

earth, night and day (with alternating light and darkness), the supply of provisions, rainfall with its power of quickening and devastating, the means of communications, the blowing of winds and shade and sunshine, all point to one controlling agency, God, the Maker of heavens and earth. And if God has done so much for the material requirements of man, He cannot be imagined to have neglected his spiritual needs which are much more important. Let all thinking men think and ponder and again think and ponder.

The Quran takes the universe as a whole to prove its theme. The objects of nature taken individually do not furnish such conclusive evidence of the existence of God as the whole universe taken together. The earth may be said to owe its existence to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or a similar reason may be given for the origin of the sun and the moon and so on. But when the universe as one united whole and the deep order that permeates it are taken into consideration, it becomes impossible to escape the conclusion, that this universe has not come into existence accidentally. Indeed, the consummate harmony that prevails throughout the universe forcefully points to the fact that the whole system has been created and is being directed by one Intelligent Being Who is All-Powerful and All-Knowing.

Taken in the metaphorical sense, the ship mentioned in the verse will be taken to stand for Prophets who help men to cross the gulfs of carnal desires and materialistic concepts of things which separate men from God, rain being likened to God's revelation which comes down like rain and gives life to the world after it has become dead. The clouds send down no new water. Water already exists in the vast oceans of the earth but, as it is impure, men cannot make use of it. God purifies it and changes it into clouds and then sends it back to earth in the form of pure rain-water. Similarly, by sending a new revelation

166. And there are some among men who take for themselves objects of worship other than Allah, loving them as they should love Allah. But believers are stronger in their love for Allah. And if those who transgress could *now* see the time when they shall see the punishment, *they would realize* that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is severe in punishing.¹⁷²

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا
يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا
لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرْوْنَ الْعَذَابَ لَا
أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ۖ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿١٦٦﴾

God purifies beliefs, which, with the passage of time, get mixed up with false notions and superstitious ideas. It is inconceivable that God Who supplies man with fresh rain-water for the maintenance of his physical life should have omitted to supply him with heavenly water which is so necessary for the preservation of his spiritual life. Similarly, night and day stand for the alternating periods of light and darkness, it being hinted that the coming of the Holy Prophet heralds the dawn of a new day.

Moreover, by laying special emphasis on the study of the phenomena of nature, in the verse under comment, the attention of disbelievers is also drawn to the fact that they could not possibly hope to succeed in their designs against the Holy Prophet, because the whole universe is controlled by God and is working in favour of His Prophet and in furthering his cause.

172. Important Words:

دُونَ (other than) is derived from دَانَ *i.e.* he or it was or became low, mean or weak. دُونَ used as an adjective means, low, mean, paltry, or contemptible; also high and noble. When used as a preposition, as in the present verse, دُونَ gives the sense of (1) this side of *i.e.* behind or lower in rank; (2) that side of *i.e.* ahead or higher in rank; (3) other than (Aqrab).

أَنْدَاد (objects of worship). See 2: 23.

Commentary:

While dealing with the subject of idolatry the Quran makes use of the following four words: (1) نَد (like or equal); (2) شَرِيكَ (co-partner or sharer); (3) إِلَه (worthy of worship); and (4) رَب (sustainer). While the first two words are used only about those objects of worship that are other than God, the last two are used about God also. The word نَد (like or equal) which is used in the present verse refers to such objects of worship as are supposed to be like God or equal to Him, being contrary or opposed to the true God. Among those who have set up أَنْدَاد (equals) with God may be mentioned the Zoroastrians who believe in two independent gods, *i.e.*, Ormazd, the God of Light, and Ahriman, the God of Darkness.

Love of God is the essence of all religion. In Islam it forms the central point, the pivot round which the whole Islamic teaching revolves. No religion has laid so much emphasis on love of God as Islam has done. The Holy Prophet was so much engrossed in God that he was spoken of by the pagan Arabs as having fallen in love with Him, even as a lover falls in love with his beloved. No other subject has been so completely and so repeatedly dealt with in the Quran as God's beauty and excellence and such of His attributes as create an irresistible love and longing in the human soul for his Lord and Master Who is spoken of in the Quran as

167. *Aye, they would certainly realize if they could see the time* ^awhen those who were followed shall disown their followers and shall see the punishment, and all their ties shall be cut asunder.¹⁷³

إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ
وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ ﴿١٦٧﴾

168. And those who followed shall say: ^b'If we could only return, we would disown them as they have disowned us.' Thus will Allah show them their works as anguish for them, and they shall not get out of the Fire.¹⁷⁴

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّنَا كَرَّرْنَا فَتَنَّاكَ مِنْهُمْ
كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦٨﴾

^a28 : 64,65 ; 34 : 33, 34. ^b23 : 100 ; 26 : 103.

a "Most Loving God" (11 : 91 ; 85 : 15). Yet Christian writers accuse Islam of being a cold and calculating religion, bereft of all love for God. Can anything be farther from the truth ?

173. Important Words :

تبرأ (disown) is derived from برى . They say برى من العيب او الدين i.e. he became free from defect or got clear of debt. بارأ شريكه means, he became separated from his partner. تبرأ من فلان means, he separated from such a one ; he got clear of him ; he declared to have no connection with him ; he renounced or disowned him (Aqrab).

اسباب (ties) is the plural of سبب which signifies : (1) a tie or a rope ; (2) a means which helps a person to reach his destination ; (3) a way or a path, leading to something ; (4) love or relationship (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse vividly describes the scene when those guilty of idolatry will be called to account for their evil beliefs and practices. They will look to their leaders for help and guidance, but the latter will disown them and all ties of love and kinship between them will

be cut asunder and all supports and all means of rescue will be lost. The verse is a stern warning to those who blindly follow their leaders and, being misled by them, reject God's Messengers.

174. Important Words :

كر (return) is the infinitive noun from كر . They say كر الفارس i.e. the horseman returned to the attack after he had raced back. فعله كره بعد كره means, he did it again and again. كره therefore means: (1) returning to the attack ; (2) returning to the original state ; (3) a turn or time (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

حسرات (anguish) is the plural of حسرة which is derived from حسر . They say حسر البحر i.e. the sea sank or receded from the shore. حسر الرجل means : (1) the man was tired and wearied ; (2) he was sorrowful and grieved. حسرة means : (1) feeling intense anguish at a loss sustained or harm suffered ; (2) regret or compunction ; (3) grief or sorrow for a thing that has escaped one (Aqrab & Tāj).

Commentary :

Having despaired of receiving help from their leaders, the disbelievers will, on the Day of Judgment, wish that they may be sent back to the

169. O ye men, eat of what is lawful and good in the earth; and follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely he is to you an open enemy.¹⁷⁵

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٦٩﴾

^a5:89; 8:70; 16:115. ^b2:209; 6:143; 24:22. ^c7:23; 12:6; 28:16; 35:7; 36:61.

world so that they may denounce these leaders in this world just as they were disowning them in the next. But this will be only a vain desire doomed to perish unfulfilled. Nay, the self-same desire will become a source of anguish and punishment for them.

The clause, *they shall not get out of the Fire*, does not mean that the punishment of Hell will be unending. Islam does not believe in the eternity of Hell. While the Quran speaks of the blessings of Paradise as never-ending and everlasting, it does not say so of the punishment of Hell but simply speaks of it as being very long (11:108, 109). The sayings of the Holy Prophet also support this view. "There will come a time over Hell," he is reported to have said, "when there will remain none in it" ('Ummāl). The verse only means that, being unable to bear the torment of Hell, the dwellers of the Fire will wish to come out of it, but will not be able to do so (32:21), until their term of punishment is over. The word *Fire* as used in this verse may also mean the fire of anguish and agony in which they shall burn on account of their designs and cherished hopes having come to nought.

175. Important Words:

حلال (lawful) is the noun-infinitive from حل which has several meanings. حل العقدة means, he unloosened the tie. حل بالمكان means, he alighted at the house. حل عليه غضب الله means, God's punishment came down on him or befell him. حل الشيء means, the thing became lawful. حل اليمين means, he absolved himself from the oath. حلال is, therefore, that the use of which

has been permitted by God; a lawful thing. The word is the opposite of حرام which means, a forbidden or unlawful thing (Aqrab).

طيبا (good) is derived from طاب meaning, he or it became good. طاب الشيء means, the thing was good or pure or wholesome. Thus طيب would mean, good, pure, wholesome and agreeable (Aqrab).

خطوات (footsteps) is the plural of خطوة which is derived from خطا which means, he stepped or walked. خطوة means, the distance between the two feet of a person while walking. The clause لا تتبعوا خطوات الشيطان would also mean, do not follow the ways of Satan (Aqrab).

مبين (open) is derived from بان meaning: (1) it became clear and manifest; or (2) it became separated or disunited or cut off. ابان الشيء means: (1) he or it made the thing clear; or (2) he or it cut the thing into pieces or made it disunited. ابان الشيء means, the thing became clear. Thus مبين would mean: (1) a being or thing which is clear and manifest; (2) a being or thing which makes other things clear; and (3) a being or thing which cuts another thing into pieces and makes it disunited (Aqrab).

Commentary:

Good actions must accompany true faith. So with this verse begins a discussion of the second part of Abraham's prayer regarding the work of the Promised Prophet, i.e., the teaching of the laws of *Shari'at* and of the wisdom underlying them.

Henceforward ordinances about Prayer, Fasting, Pilgrimage and *Zakāt* are given and so are the laws relating to social matters; and as

170. He only enjoins upon you what is evil and what is foul, and that you say of Allah what you do not know.¹⁷⁶

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَإِنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى
اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

2 : 269 ; 24 : 22.

food plays an important part in the formation of a man's character, regulations concerning it are mentioned first. According to Islam, all food should be: (1) *حلال* i.e. allowed by the Law; and (2) it should also be *طيب* i.e. good, pure, wholesome and agreeable. Under the second condition, sometimes even lawful things become forbidden. Thus, for instance, the eating of goat's flesh is *حلال* or lawful; but if some flesh becomes rotten and putrefied, it will not be *طيب* and will consequently not be permissible. This distinction between *حلال* (lawful) and *طيب* (good and pure) food is not to be found in any teaching except that of Islam. So comprehensive is the Islamic teaching on this subject that not only are conditions laid down as to when lawful things become prohibited, as in this verse, but also as to when even unlawful food becomes permissible (2 : 174 ; 5 : 4 ; 6 : 120, 146 ; 16 : 116).

The prohibition against following Satan, coming immediately after the commandment with respect to food, alludes to the influence which physical actions exercise on the moral and spiritual conditions of man. The use of unlawful and unwholesome food tends to impair our moral and spiritual faculties, while lawful and wholesome food improves our morals and helps the development of our spiritual powers. This subject is also dealt with in 23 : 52.

As explained under Important Words above, the word *مبين* gives three different meanings. Thus *عدو مبين* would mean: (1) that Satan is a manifest and open enemy of man; (2) that Satan is not only manifest himself but also makes his connections manifest—leaving a visible

trace of wickedness wherever he treads; and (3) that he is always striving to create disunion among the Faithful and to cut asunder all such ties as God has ordered to be made firm. In this connection see also 2 : 28.

176. Important Words:

سوء (evil) is the noun-infinitive from *ساء* meaning, he or it became bad or evil. *ساء الامر فلانا* means, the thing was disagreeable to such a one and made him sorrowful. *سوء* means: (1) evil, bad or wicked; (2) mischief and corruption; (3) anything that makes a person sad and sorrowful (Aqrab & Mufradât).

فحشاء (foul) is derived from *فحش* i.e. it became excessive or immoderate; or it became manifestly or excessively bad, evil or unseemly. Thus *فحشاء* means: (1) anything manifestly or excessively bad, evil, etc.; (2) anything forbidden by God; (3) foul talk or saying; and (4) illegal intercourse or fornication (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse speaks of the subtle ways by which Satan misleads man. He first prompts him to do deeds which do not appear to be manifestly wicked and the influence of which is confined to the person of the doer alone. Then, step by step, he makes the deluded person a hardened sinner, causing him to lose all sense of modesty, till finally the man goes so far as to make innovations in religion for which he possesses neither knowledge nor authority. As Satan's promptings are never based on knowledge, so the natural consequence is that those who follow him begin to attribute to God things without having the least authority for so doing.

171. And "when it is said to them, 'Follow that which Allah has sent down,' they say: 'Nay, we will follow that wherein we found our fathers.' What! even if their fathers had no sense at all and no guidance?"¹⁷⁷

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوْ لَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾

172. And the case of those who disbelieve is like the case of one who shouts to that which hears nothing but a call and a cry. ^bThey are deaf, dumb, and blind.—so they do not understand.¹⁷⁸

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّوا عَنْهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

^a5; 105; 10: 79; 21: 53, 54; 31: 22. ^bSee 2: 19.

Their theories are based on ignorance and not on knowledge. In fact, all knowledge is based on close observation, and close observation cannot be had, unless one enjoys nearness of a thing. So it is futile to expect true knowledge of God from those who are away from Him.

دعاء (call). دعاه means, he called a person by addressing him (Aqrab).

نداء (cry) means: (1) a loud voice or cry; (2) a general call without any specific person being addressed (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

177. Commentary:

It is indeed strange, but nevertheless a hard fact, that in matters of religion which so deeply concern man, he is often content to follow blindly the footsteps of his forefathers and does not even care to satisfy himself that his forefathers were wise and well-guided people. On the other hand, in worldly matters where only the interests of this life are at stake, and that too partially, he often takes meticulous care to see that he adopts the right course and does not blindly follow others.

In this verse the Holy Prophet has been likened to a herdsman who shouts to his flock but they hear nothing except the sound, being unable to understand the meaning of the words uttered by him. Similarly, the people whom the Prophet addresses are like a herd of animals unable to follow and understand his call. The words of the verse fully expressed would read somewhat like this: مثل الذين كفروا كمثل اصحاب الذي ينعق i.e. "the case of those who disbelieve is like that of a people surrounding one who shouts, etc." The Holy Prophet conveyed the divine message to disbelievers. They heard his voice but made no effort to grasp the meaning of his message. His words fell, as it were, on deaf ears, with the result that the spiritual faculties of the disbelievers became wholly vitiated and they stooped low to the level of animals and beasts (7: 180; 25: 45).

178. Important Words:

ينعق (shouts) is derived from نعى which means, he cried aloud. They say نعى الراعى بغيره i.e. the shepherd shouted to his flock. نعى المؤذن means, the *Muezzin* raised his voice to call people to Prayer (Aqrab).

173. ^aO ye who believe, eat of the good things We have provided for you, and render thanks to Allah, if it is He Whom you worship.¹⁷⁹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا سَرَقْنَاكُمْ
وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾

174. ^bHe has made unlawful to you only that which dies of itself, and blood and the flesh of swine, and that on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked. But he who is driven by necessity, being neither disobedient nor exceeding the limit, it shall be no sin for him. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.¹⁸⁰

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخَنِزِيرِ
وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَن اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَ
لَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾

^a5:6; 16:115; 23:52; 40:65. ^b5:4; 6:146; 16:116.

179. Commentary :

The injunction contained in the words, "eat of طَيِّبَات *i.e.* good, pure and wholesome things," indicates that Muslims are not allowed to use things which may, in any way, injure their physical or moral or spiritual health, though they may be حلال *i.e.* allowed by Law. The injunction is thus very important and must be far-reaching in its effect. The words, *We have provided for you*, further imply that Muslims are also not allowed to make use of things acquired by unfair and unlawful means. Only the things bestowed by God, *i.e.*, those lawfully earned, are to be used.

180. Important Words :

الميتة (that which dies of itself) is derived from مات *i.e.* he died. ميتة means : (1) an animal that has died a natural death (Aqrab); (2) an animal that has not been slaughtered in a manner prescribed by Law (Lane & Mufradāt) الخنزير (swine). Authorities differ as to the derivation of this word, some deriving it from خنز and others from خزر. The word الخنزرة means, hard and rugged land; or a clumsy, badly-finished axe. خنزرت الرجل means, the man looked with the

hinder parts or outer angles of his eyes (Lisān). خنزرت العين means, the eye was or became narrow and small. خنزرت الرجل means, the man looked from the outer angle of the eye; or he had a distortion of one of his eyes. The Arabs say: كل خنزير اخنزر *i.e.* all swine look from the outer angles of their eyes. خنزرت المرء means the man affected or pretended to be cunning الخنزير means, the swine, the hog, the pig; a certain well-known foul animal the eating of whose flesh is said to be forbidden by every Prophet (Lane). The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement says of the word خنزير: "The very name of this foul animal contains an allusion to the prohibition of its flesh. It is a combination of خنز and ار, the first part meaning, 'very foul' and the second, 'I see.' The word thus literally means, 'I see it very foul' . . . What is still more wonderful is that in Hindi this animal is known by the name सूँ which is similarly composed of two words *i.e.* सू and र, the latter part being identical with the latter part of the Arabic word and the former being the exact equivalent of the first part of the Arabic form. The Hindi word, therefore, exactly means the same as the Arabic, *viz.*,

'I see it very foul'. . . In Hindi this animal is also known as **بد** meaning 'bad or foul' which is probably a translation of the original Arabic word" (Teachings of Islam).

أهل (invoked) is derived from **هل** meaning, it (the moon) made its appearance; he (the man) cried aloud. **أهل** also means, it made its appearance; he called or cried aloud. **أهل بالتسمية على الذبيحة** means, he invoked or pronounced the name of God while slaughtering an animal. **أهل السيف** means, the sword cut into him (Aqrah). **أهل** which is the infinitive-noun from **أهل** means, to raise one's voice aloud by way of exclamation, on seeing the **هلال** or the moon of the first night (Mufradât). Thus **أهل به لغير الله** would mean, on which the name of anything beside God has been invoked at the time of slaughter; or which has been cut or slaughtered for a being other than God.

اضطر (driven by necessity) is derived from **ضر** which means, it did harm. **ضره الى كذا** means, it forced him to resort to that. **اضطره** means, he compelled him against his will. **اضطره الى كذا** means, he compelled him against his will to have recourse to that (Aqrah).

باغ (disobedient) is derived from **بغى** meaning, he rebelled; he disobeyed; he committed a wrong. **باغ** is really **بأغى** being the active participle from **بغى** meaning, one who disobeys; one who is rebellious (Aqrah).

عاد (exceeding the limit) is the active participle from **عدا** i.e. he exceeded the proper or the prescribed limit. **عادى عليه** means, he transgressed against him. **عاد** is really **عادى** meaning, one who exceeds the limit (Aqrah).

أثم (sin). The verb **أثم** means, he did a thing which was unlawful for him; he did a thing which made him deserving of punishment. Thus the noun **أثم** means: (1) anything unlawful i.e. a sin; (2) anything which makes a person deserving of punishment (Aqrah); (3) anything that pricks the mind as something evil (Mufradât).

Commentary:

This verse speaks only of food that is **حرام** or unlawful. It makes no mention of **طيبات** or pure and wholesome things to which reference has already been made in the preceding verse. It should not be supposed that the four things mentioned in this verse are the only things prohibited in Islam. As a matter of fact, Islam prohibits the use of many things; but they are divided into grades or classes, some of them being **حرام** or unlawful and others being **منوع** or simply forbidden. The verse under comment mentions only the former class. The forbidden things have been stated by the Holy Prophet and are mentioned in Hadith. They must not be used by the Faithful but they cannot be called **حرام** or unlawful. In fact, there is a great difference between unlawful (**حرام**) and forbidden (**منوع**) things. Islam recognizes due difference in the importance of different things, and so all prohibitions cannot be classed together and treated as of equal importance. The use of **حرام** or an unlawful thing has a great and direct bearing on the moral and spiritual development of man but it is not so with a **منوع** or forbidden thing which stands on a lower level of importance, though both are prohibited.

Among the things declared **حرام** or unlawful in this verse, the injuriousness of the blood and the flesh of a dead animal as food has been recognized by most authorities on medicine. The use of the flesh of swine has also proved to be injurious not only to the physical health of man, but also to his moral and spiritual health. The swine eats filth and takes delight in living in dirty places. It has indecent habits and possesses the evil trait of sex-perversion. Tape-worms, scrofula, cancer and encysted trichina are known to be more prevalent among pork-eating peoples. The use of pork also causes trichinosis.

The clause, *and that on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked*, refers to that animal at the time of whose slaughter the name

of any deity other than Allah is invoked or that animal which is slaughtered with a view to winning the pleasure of an idol or a saint etc., even though the name of Allah may have been mentioned while slaughtering it. Hence, all such animals as are sacrificed in order to propitiate a false deity or a saint, or any food that is cooked as an offering to a deceased person have been condemned as unlawful. Such foods are spiritually harmful. The incentive to these offerings is شرك (i.e. idolatry) and شرك is tantamount to rebellion against God.

In spite of the fact that the above mentioned things have been declared to be unlawful, the verse goes on to say that if for want of food the very life of a person should be in danger, considerations of the preservation of human life must temporarily prevail against other considerations. This is a case of choosing the lesser of two evils. Hence the verse very wisely makes an exception in case of a real and urgent necessity when no other food is available and one is in real danger of losing one's life if one does not use the unlawful food. In fact, of the four unlawful things the first three have been declared unlawful mostly on the basis of the fact that they are injurious to physical and moral health, and it is certainly wise to permit their use in case of urgent necessity when there is real danger to life. As for the fourth thing i.e. a food consecrated to any other being beside Allah, it is evident that it is not injurious intrinsically. It is injurious only from the point of view of faith. Therefore when such a thing is used merely to save one's life, which may be so usefully employed in the service of religion, there can be no real objection in eating it, because this extremely rare act cannot be considered as

involving شرك or idolatry, particularly when it is performed with the sanction of God.

Permission for the exceptional use of such things is, however, qualified by two important conditions: (1) that one who resorts to this use must not be باغى (i.e. disobedient). There should be no lurking spirit of revolt or disobedience behind the act. The circumstances must be real and the condition genuine, and nothing should be done out of design and wilfulness; (2) that the user of unlawful food under exceptional circumstances should not become عاد i.e. he should not exceed the limit. He should confine himself to such quantity only as is absolutely essential to save life. Thus the exceptional use is permissible only at a time when one is under *bona fide* constraint and is in real danger, and then only to the extent which is absolutely necessary for saving life.

Though it has been declared in this verse that there is no sin in partaking of a prohibited food when no revolt or transgression is intended, yet as one might err in judging what is revolt or transgression and what is not, and thus be unconsciously guilty of breaking a divine commandment, the Quran adds the words: *surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful*, meaning that an unintentional deviation will be forgiven by the Merciful God. The clause also reminds a Muslim that though it has been made permissible for him to take unlawful food in exceptional circumstances, yet such circumstances may be due to certain hidden shortcomings of his own for which he should seek God's forgiveness, and that if he does so he will find God Forgiving and Merciful. In this connection see also 5:4; 6:146 & 16:116.

175. "Those who conceal that which Allah has sent down of the Book and ^btake in exchange for that a paltry price, they fill their bellies with nothing but fire. ^cAllah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And for them is a grievous punishment.¹⁸¹

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيُسْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٥﴾

176. It is they ^dwho have taken error in exchange for guidance and punishment for forgiveness. How great is their endurance of the Fire! ^e¹⁸²

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْغَفْوَةِ فَبِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ ﴿١٧٦﴾

^aSee 2 : 147. ^bSee 2 : 42. ^c2 : 160. ^d2 : 17 ; 3 : 178 ; 4 : 45.

181. Important Words:

زَكَّيْهِمْ (purify them) is from زَكَ meaning, he purified him; he elevated him (Aqrah). See also 2 : 130.

Commentary:

Sin generally originates from an undue love of the world but the world is indeed a small thing as compared with the Hereafter (9 : 38). Those who forsake truth or conceal it for the things of this world eat naught but fire which will eventually consume their own bodies. The verse beautifully hints that the things of this world, as opposed to spiritual blessings, are like the hell-fire of the next. As food goes to make up the tissues of the body, so will the body of an enemy of truth eating fire become one whole mass of fire, serving as fuel for the fire of Hell. The words also signify that as fire cannot satisfy hunger and thirst, but rather increases them, so the things of this world cannot bring about peace of mind and contentment but rather the reverse of them. The verse also constitutes a stern warning to those preachers who, in order to gain worldly ends, accommodate their sermons to the views of the listeners and refrain from speaking the truth.

The words, *Allah will not speak to them*, do not mean that God will not speak to them at all; for God being the Lord and Master will speak even to the guilty on the Day of Judgement, but such speech will be like that of a judge condemning a criminal to punishment. What is meant is that God will not speak to them with love and affection.

The words, *nor will He purify them*, mean that He will not adjudge them as purified but will declare them unclean and untoly. These words may also mean that on the Day of Judgement God will not elevate them or exalt them to Himself but will leave them abased and neglected. Again, as these people opposed the truth in the world in order that they might enjoy the good things thereof, they will correspondingly have a painful punishment in the Hereafter and will be deprived of all sweetness of life in the world to come (see Important Words under 2 : 8).

182. Commentary:

The words مَا أَصَابَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ i.e. *how great is their endurance of the Fire*, and similar other expressions are used in the Arabic language to

177. That is because "Allah has sent down the Book with the truth; and surely, they who disagree concerning the Book are gone far in enmity."¹⁸³

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ۝

R. 22 178. ^bIt is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and ^cspends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for *ransoming* the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakāt; and those ^dwho fulfil their promise when they have made one, and the patient in ^epoverty and afflictions and *the steadfast* in time of war; ^fit is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing.¹⁸⁴

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالسَّكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۝

^a17 : 106. ^b2 : 190. ^c76 : 9. ^d9 : 4; 13 : 21. ^e2 : 215; 6 : 43; 7 : 95. ^f49 : 16.

express wonder on the part of the looker-on and tenacity and intensiveness of the relevant quality in the object. The expression, therefore, means that though the deeds of disbelievers are sure to bring down upon them the great punishment of Fire, yet they so tenaciously persist in their wicked course as to indicate that they are, as it were, possessed of great endurance of its torment.

183. Commentary :

The estrangement of the disbelievers from the truth and their long association with falsehood have made them callous and incapable of knowing and accepting the Quranic revelation. Just as a sick person sometimes loses his faculty of taste and consequently declines to take delicious things, similarly these people, owing

to their lack of contact with truth for a long time, have become inclined to reject the word of God. They prefer small worldly gains to the great spiritual and material advantages that would certainly have accrued to them, if they had accepted the truth. The words *في شقاق بعيد* i.e. "gone far in enmity" signify that there has come to exist a wide gulf between these people on the one hand and the truth on the other.

184. Important Words :

البر (righteousness) is derived from ب ر . They say ب ر والده i.e. he obeyed his father or he behaved kindly and lovingly towards him. ب ر الله means, he obeyed God. ب ر في قوله means, he spoke truthfully. ب رت الصلوة means, the Prayer was accepted. ب ر (birr) therefore, means: (1) a gift or favour; (2) obedience; (3) righteousness;

4) truthfulness (Aqrah); also (5) extensive goodness or goodness of a high order (Mufradāt). And بر (barr) is one who does good to others. It is also one of the attributive names of God (Aqrah).

ابن السيل (wayfarer) literally means, son of the road. The word signifies: (1) one who travels much (Lane); (2) a traveller or wayfarer who is far away from home i.e. one who is on a long journey (Mufradāt); (3) simply one on journey; (4) one whose way has been cut short to him i.e. one who is stranded on the way (Aqrah).

الرقاب (captives) is the plural of رقبة (a captive or a slave) which is derived from رقب. They say رقبه i.e. he waited for or looked for him; he watched or guarded him; he was on his guard against him; he put a rope round his neck. رقبة means: (1) neck; (2) the hinder part thereof; (3) a person or being possessing a neck; (4) a slave or bondman or captive or prisoner, particularly a slave or captive who has contracted with his owner or custodian for his freedom. Thus the expression في الرقاب would mean, in the ransoming of slaves or captives, etc. (Aqrah, Mufradāt & Lane).

البأس (poverty) and الئاس (war) are both derived from بئس or يؤس i.e. (1) he was or became strong and valiant in war or fight; (2) he was or became in a state of great want or poverty or distress. البأس means: (1), distress; (2) poverty; (3) hardship; (4) misfortune; (5) calamity; and (6) war. And الئاس means: (1) might or strength in war or fight; (2) courage, valour and prowess; (3) war or fight; (4) fear; (5) punishment or torment; and (6) harm or injury, as in لا باس به i.e. there is no harm in it (Lane & Aqrah). See also below.

الضراء (afflictions) is derived from ضر meaning, he caused him a loss or an injury. الضراء means: (1) vicissitudes of time; (2) hardship; (3) loss of life or property; (4) afflictions; and (5) famine (Aqrah). الضراء is especially that

evil or affliction which relates to one's person, as disease, etc., whereas البأس is that which relates to property, as poverty, etc. (Lane).

Commentary :

The verse points to an important principle relating to form and spirit. Every commandment must have an outward form as well as an underlying spirit. What, however, is really meant is the underlying spirit and not the outward form which mostly serves as an outer shell for preserving the inner kernel. To illustrate this principle, the verse refers to the commandment relating to the turning of faces to a particular direction while offering Prayers. The verse points out that Islam has not directed the Faithful to face in a particular direction during Prayers, because it considers such an act to be of any intrinsic virtue. The fixing of a special direction is merely meant to bring about uniformity, whereas what really counts is the purpose underlying it, which is perfection of faith and deeds. The Quran, accordingly, proceeds to give in a nutshell the Islamic teachings about these two subjects.

The literal translation of the clause ولكن البر من آمن is, "but righteousness is one who believes" which is obviously incomplete. So some words must be understood here. According to Sibwaih, a great authority on Arabic syntax, the rules of the Arabic language sometimes permit the omitting of a word for the sake of brevity or for laying special stress or for affording greater elasticity in speech. In accordance with this rule, the clause would read: ولكن البر من آمن i.e. "but righteousness is the righteousness of one who believes." Instances of such omissions of words are not lacking in the Arabic language (Sibwaih, i. 109).

According to yet another rule of the Arabic language, a مصدر (infinitive noun) is sometimes used in place of an اسم فاعل (active participle) in order to convey an intensified sense. Thus the word بر (righteousness) in the verse would

mean *بر كامل* i.e. "perfectly righteous or very righteous," and the clause would be translated as "perfectly righteous or very righteous is he who believes in Allah"

The pronoun in the expression *حبه* (love of Him) may refer either to the word "Allah" in the previous clause, and in that case, the clause *آتى المال على حبه* would mean, "spends his money for love of God." Or it may refer to the word *مال* (money). In this case, the clause would mean, "spends his money notwithstanding his love for money." Lastly, it may also refer to the noun implied in the verb *آتى* i.e. the act of spending. In this case the clause would mean "spends his money for the love of spending it." All these meanings are correct and may be applied. Indeed, it is one of the inimitable beauties of the Quranic diction that it chooses words and constructions that go to convey a variety of meanings in the shortest of expressions.

The verse affords another example of this kind in the expression *ابن السبيل* (son of the road). As explained under Important Words, this expression gives no less than four meanings and all are equally applicable here. So spending on *ابن سبيل* would signify: (1) spending money in order to encourage travelling, which is a means of increasing knowledge and extending social relations; (2) helping such travellers as are on long journeys and are far away from home; (3) helping all wayfarers; and (4) helping such wayfarers and travellers as become stranded on the way. This is indeed a wonderful example of the combination of brevity and comprehensiveness.

The verse also throws some light on the Islamic teaching about slavery. Islam prescribes it as a sign of true faith and perfect righteousness that money be spent on emancipating slaves. Nay, even such as are made captives from among those who attack Muslims with a view to annihilating them are to be shown mercy and granted freedom out of money

supplied by Muslims. For the discussion of Islamic teachings about slavery see 24 : 34.

The word *الصابرين* (the patient) in this verse is in the accusative case, while, according to the common rules of Arabic grammar, it should be in the nominative case like the preceding word *الموفون* (those who fulfil). The change is not without purpose and has been made to put emphasis on the word. According to Abū 'Alī, a well-known authority on Arabic syntax, when a sentence contains a number of nouns of praise or dispraise, it is considered idiomatic to vary their grammatical inflection (Muḥīṭ, part ii). This is done to intensify the meaning.

As pointed out in the beginning, this verse gives a gist of the teachings of Islam. It begins with the fundamental Islamic beliefs and doctrines which are the source and basis of all actions and on the rectitude of which depends the rectitude of one's actions. The most fundamental of these is belief in God Who is the central point of all faith. Second in importance is belief in the Last Day or the Day of Judgement, upon a real understanding of which depends the direction of man's actions in this life. Then follows belief in angels who serve as a sort of intermediaries between God and His creation. Then there are divine scriptures embodying God's revelation which point out the way to the attainment of His pleasure and the purification of man's soul. Lastly are Prophets who are the recipients of God's revelations, communicating to man the will of God and serving as models to be followed and imitated by him. These five objects of faith have been mentioned here in their natural order and not necessarily in order of importance.

After stating the fundamental objects of faith, the verse proceeds to mention some of the more important ordinances relating to man's actions. Pride of place is given to charity which a man gives not as a duty imposed

179. O ye who believe, "equitable retaliation in the matter of the slain is prescribed for you; the free man for the free man, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But if one is granted any remission by one's brother, then pursuing the matter for the realization of the blood-money shall be done with fairness and the murderer shall pay him the blood-money in a handsome manner. This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. And whoso transgresses thereafter, for him there shall be a grievous punishment."¹⁸⁵

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ
الْحُرِّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنْثَىٰ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ فَمَنْ
عَفَىٰ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبِعْهُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدِّ
إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ
فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

2:195; 5:46.

on him, but as prompted by love, solicitude and sympathy for his kinsmen and fellow-beings or out of love for common humanity. Next come the commandments regarding Prayer and *Zakāt* which help to establish a true connection between God and man on the one hand and regulate relations between man and man on the other. Finally are laid down the two bulwarks of character and morality i.e. (1) the redemption of promises and pledges; and (2) the displaying of fortitude, patience and steadfastness in time of distress, the first-mentioned forming one of the bases of international morality and the latter the means of its perfection.

185. Important Words:

قصاص (retaliation) is derived from *قص*. They say *قصه* i.e. (1) he cut it (hair, etc.), or he clipped it; (2) he followed him closely or followed in his footsteps; and (3) he described or narrated it. *قاص الرجل* means, he did with the man the like of that which he did to him; he retaliated on him for the wrong done to him. *اقص الامير زيداً من بكر* means, the Amir retaliated upon Bakr for the wrong he had done to Zaid. *قصاص* therefore, means, retaliation, by slaying

for slaying, and wounding for wounding, etc. (Aqrab); or the following up of a murder or an injury with a view to retaliating or punishing (Mufradāt).

القتل (the slain) is the plural of *قتيل* in the sense of *مقتول* i.e. a murdered person (Aqrab).

الحر (freeman) is derived from *حر* meaning: (1) he was free-born; (2) he was of good and noble origin. *حر الارض* means, the best portion of land. Thus *الحر* means: (1) a freeman, opposite of slave or captive; (2) a noble person; (3) the good and pure portion of a thing (Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse comprises a very important principle of civil law, i.e., equality of man and necessity of awarding proportionate punishment to all offenders without distinction, unless an offender is forgiven by the relatives of his victim under circumstances that are expected to lead to improvement and betterment of conditions.

The words *كتب عليكم* i.e. "is prescribed for you" show that retaliation for the slain is not simply permissible but is obligatory. Failure to inflict the punishment prescribed by Law on

the offender would be tantamount to a violation of the commandment. The duty, however, of punishing the culprit does not devolve on the heirs of the murdered person but, as the plural number of the expression *عليكم* (for you) shows, on the authorities responsible for the maintenance of law and order. But, as the singular number of the expression *اخي* (one's brother) shows, the former have been given the option to forgive. The clause, therefore, means that on the one hand the concerned authorities are bound to punish the offender according to the requirements of law, having no right to pardon him of their own accord, and on the other hand the heirs of the murdered person are not entitled to take the law into their own hands and inflict the punishment on the guilty person themselves.

The verse under comment makes no distinction between different classes of persons in connection with the law of retaliation. The words used are of a general nature and apply to all offenders who might be guilty of murder, no matter of what rank or station in life or of what religion. Any person, irrespective of his caste or creed and irrespective of his station, must be put to death for the murder of any other person, unless pardoned by the relatives of the victim and unless the pardon has the sanction of the authorities. The sayings of the Holy Prophet are explicit on this point (*Mājah*, ch. on *Diyyāt*).

There is indeed a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that a Muslim should not be put to death for killing a disbeliever. But this saying, read in conjunction with several others bearing on the same subject and interpreted in the light of the relevant Quranic verses, forces us to the conclusion that the word "disbeliever" in the tradition referred to above is not general but means only *حري كافر* i.e. such disbeliever as belongs to a people who are at war with the Muslims or, in other words, one who is a member of a belligerent community. In fact, the Companions of the Holy Prophet are all agreed that a Muslim may be put to death for

murdering a non-belligerent unbeliever. (*Ṭabarī*, v. 44). The Holy Prophet himself ordered a Muslim murderer to be put to death for the murder of a non-belligerent non-Muslim (*Qutnī*).

The expression, *the freeman for the freeman and the slave for the slave and the female for the female*, does not mean that a freeman should not be punished with death for the murder of a slave or that a woman should not be put to death for killing a member of the opposite sex, etc. The other verses of the Quran as well as the sayings and the practice of the Holy Prophet clearly establish the fact that the social position of a person or the sex of a party was never considered a bar to the application of this law. The peculiar construction, i.e., "the freeman for the freeman," etc. has been adopted here to refer to, and abolish, a custom of the Arabs whereby they used to take into consideration the sex and the social status of the murderer and the murdered person when determining punishment. If a man of high social position happened to kill a man of humble position, or if the slave of a great man killed that of a humble man, or if a lady of noble birth murdered a woman of humble origin, etc. the murderer was not punished with death, leniency being shown to him or her in sundry other ways as well. The commandment contained in this verse seeks to abolish that obnoxious custom of the Arabs and lays down in clear and unmistakable terms that no regard should be paid to the status of the murderer in the matter of retaliation.

In fact, the law of retaliation, as stated in this verse, is confined to the clause, *equitable retaliation in the matter of the slain is prescribed for you*, which forms a complete sentence in itself, giving a full and complete meaning. The ensuing expression, *the freeman for the freeman and the slave for the slave and the female for the female*, is something extra, not forming part of the law. It only contains a repudiation

of the Arab custom referred to above and illustrates, by giving three instances, how the law is to be administered. Such an expression is known as *جمله استثنائية* or *جمله مستثناة* in Arabic grammar, and is technically introduced with a view to answering a question which is suggested by the preceding clause to which it is added without any intervening conjunction. The question answered in such an expression is often understood and not expressed (Mukhtasar).

The sayings of the Holy Prophet and his practice also support the above interpretation, for it is on record that he once ordered a woman to be put to death for murdering a man (Muslim), and on another occasion he commanded that a freeman be put to death for the murder of a slave. Says the Holy Prophet: "Whoever kills his slave shall be put to death" (Mājah). At another place he says: "The blood of all Muslims is alike in respect of the law of retaliation" (Nasa'i).

The words, *if one is granted any remission by one's brother*, show that the infliction of capital punishment is not obligatory in all cases; for in special circumstances the murderer can be exempted from the extreme punishment by the heirs of the murdered person. Such exemption, which may be termed partial as the word *شيئ* (any) indicates, means that the heirs of the deceased may renounce their right to have the murderer put to death and may in place of that receive from him blood-money. Or as the Holy Prophet has made it clear, the heirs may, in exceptional cases and with the sanction of the authorities, even grant full pardon, remitting blood-money as well (Musnad & Baihaqi).

It is worthy of note that where the Quran speaks of remission, it uses the word "brother" instead of "heir of the murdered person." This is to hint to the heir of the slain person that he should, as far as possible, take a lenient view of the offence. On the other hand, the

murderer is also enjoined to pay blood-money with good grace and without undue delay.

The concluding clause, *i.e., whoso transgresses thereafter, for him there shall be a grievous punishment*, is meant to point to the fact that if, after the matter has been amicably settled and the murderer granted a remission by the heirs of the murdered person, the heirs should take it into their heads to wreak vengeance on the murderer by killing him, they will be shown no mercy and will get capital punishment. Says the Prophet: "I will allow no remission in case of one who kills the murderer after he has accepted blood-money from him" (Jarīr).

The Islamic law of *قصاص* (retaliation), as briefly stated above, provides a very effective and practical means to put a stop to murder and safeguard human life. A man who shows a callous disregard for the life of a fellow-person loses his title to live as a member of human society. The option to pardon allowed to the heirs of the slain person should not be regarded as likely to encourage murder, for such option is not synonymous with exemption from punishment, as in ordinary circumstances the murderer will have to pay the blood-money. Moreover, the would-be murderer possesses no means to know that the heirs of the person whose murder he contemplates will actually be persuaded to pardon him; so the fear of capital punishment will always be there to deter him from the commission of the crime. Again, pardon or remission is permissible only where the circumstances are such that pardon or remission is likely to improve matters and bring about good results for all parties concerned (42:41). Thus, while on the one hand, Islam has made due provision for the suppression of crime, it has, on the other, kept open the door for the display of the noble qualities of benevolence and mercy.

The way in which the Quran has upheld the ultimate necessity of the death penalty is

180. And there is life for you in the law of retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may enjoy security.¹⁸⁶

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَوةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

indeed most significant. At the time when the Quran was revealed people exacted retaliation for an injury done to them with a vengeance. They were not satisfied even with inflicting capital punishment on the murderer, to say nothing of pardoning him. They needed no incentive to retaliation. They were already overdoing it. In fact, the Islamic law of retaliation, viewed in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time of its revelation, implied a prophecy that a time would come when people would go to the other extreme and a movement for the total abolition of capital punishment would be set on foot. So the Omniscient God laid down the law of retaliation in a form that is indispensable for the preservation and protection of human life, as well as the promotion of harmony and goodwill.

To prevent crime, Islam really aims at eliminating the conditions that produce it. It seeks to remove the very root-cause of all crime by working a complete moral reformation in man. But it does not remain content with that. It also prescribes deterrent laws in conformity with the dictates of reason, justice and humanity. The fact that, despite efforts to the contrary, the death penalty is still found on the Statute Books of most countries in one form or another constitutes a sufficient proof of the wisdom of the Islamic teaching. As a matter of fact, even the most enthusiastic protagonists of the abolition of capital punishment have not yet been able to suggest a suitable alternative to it. They have had to admit that a long term of imprisonment as an alternative is "horrible" and is "not an

ideal substitute" (Capital Punishment in the Twentieth Century by E. Roy Calvert, G. P. Putnam, London, 1930). The law of retaliation still remains the most effective deterrent to crime and an essential method to satisfy the demands of justice; and the Islamic law takes a further step to bring about reconciliation between the offender and the aggrieved party.

186. Important Words:

اولوا الالباب (men of understanding). الباب is the plural of لب (*lubb*) which is derived from لب (*labba*) meaning, he was or became possessed of لب i.e. understanding, intellect or intelligence. لب بالمكان means, he remained or dwelt in the place and kept to it. لب اللوز means, he broke the almond and took out its kernel. لب therefore, means: (1) the best and choicest part of anything; (2) kernel; (3) pith; (4) heart; (5) mind; (6) understanding, intellect and intelligence, because it is the choicest and best part of man; (7) the substance or essence of a thing (Lane). لب is something higher and purer than عقل (understanding), being the brightest and best part of it (Mufradāt). It appears that لب is the name given to that quality in man which distinguishes him from other animals and makes him a rational being.

Commentary:

This verse, small in size but great in weight, points to the wisdom underlying the law of retaliation. The words used are full of beauty of diction of the highest order. As قصاص means the killing of the murderer in retaliation of his act, the expression is like saying, "There is life

181. "It is prescribed for you, when death comes to any one of you, if he leave much wealth, that he make a will to parents and near relatives to act with fairness; *it is* an obligation on those who fear God.¹⁸⁷

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْعُرْفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ١٨١

a4 : 12, 13, 177 ; 5 : 107.

for you in death, O men of understanding." How fearful the saying but how eternally true! In fact, no peaceful social life is possible without the awarding of swift capital punishment to those who consider human life to be of so little consequence.

The clause, *there is life for you in the law of retaliation*, has a wider significance also. For a long time Muslims suffered at the hands of disbelievers indignities, persecution and even death in patient silence. But, when the cup of the iniquities of the enemies of truth became full to overflowing, further continuation of the policy of non-resistance became tantamount to the demoralization of the victims and their national death. They were, therefore, enjoined to take up arms against the aggressors and pay the wicked people in their own coin. Indeed in the law of retaliation lies hidden the secret of individual and national life. You retaliate and you live; you refrain from retaliating and you die an ignoble death. Such is the eternal and inexorable law of nature which has been so beautifully expressed in the verse under comment.

The words, *O men of understanding*, have been used to make a direct appeal to that quality in man which makes him a rational being and distinguishes him from other creatures. The Quran uses this expression whenever a strong appeal is to be made to man in his capacity as a rational being. God, as it were, says to men: "We have made you the noblest among Our creation and have bestowed on you the power

of understanding and intelligence as We have bestowed it on none other. Will you not, therefore, be wise and try to understand things?"

187. Important Words :

خيرًا (much wealth) means : (1) good as opposed to evil ; (2) wealth acquired or collected by fair and praiseworthy means ; (3) much wealth or abundance of wealth ; (4) a thing that all desire ; (5) welfare and good fortune (Mufradāt); (6) the existence of a thing in abundance and perfection ; (7) horses, etc. (Aqrab).

حقًا (obligation) is derived from حق and has been used in the verse in the accusative case, having something understood before it, the complete expression being *حق ذلك حقًا* (Kashshāf). الحق means : (1) equity or justice ; (2) right mode of acting ; (3) an obligation or a duty ; (4) a debt or anything that is owed ; (5) a thing suitable to the requirements of justice, truth, duty, etc. (Lane). See also 2 : 148.

Commentary :

As disputes about inheritance are a fruitful source of quarrels, murders, etc., the Quran here suitably turns from the subject of retaliation to that of inheritance.

The word used here for "wealth" is خير and not مال which is the ordinary word used in this sense. خير means, "wealth acquired by fair and praiseworthy means." Thus by substituting the word خير for مال, the Quran has also

emphasized the necessity of being very circumspect in the acquisition of wealth which should be acquired only by fair and lawful means. Incidentally, therefore, it has been hinted that it is not lawful for a Muslim to make a will with regard to property that has been acquired by unlawful means; for such wealth does not really belong to him.

In 4 : 12, 13 the Quran fixes the shares of all those persons who should succeed to a deceased person's property, according to the Islamic law of inheritance, and these in the first instance include parents, children, and wife or husband. In the presence of this law, the injunction given in the verse under comment would, at first sight, appear to be uncalled-for and unnecessary. As a matter of fact, those who believe in the abrogation theory, have actually declared this verse to be abrogated by the ones referred to above. But they are clearly mistaken; for the verse under comment makes an additional and necessary provision in regard to inheritance. Not seldom there come forward claimants who allege that a deceased person had bequeathed such and such portion of his property to them, and even witnesses are not wanting to support their claims. The rightful heirs, not knowing anything about it, naturally suspect the claim. The result is quarrel and litigation. Every Muslim is, therefore, enjoined to make a proper bequest at the time of his death that his property be divided among his heirs, i.e., parents, children, wives, etc., according to the Law of Islam, stating therein also the portion of any other individual who is not legally entitled to inherit from him but to whom he may wish to bequeath some of his wealth. Such a declaration made with the knowledge of his heirs and relatives is calculated to put a stop to much litigation. Such a provision is all the more essential in cases when the property or wealth is considerable.

The verse also throws out a hint that a Muslim should, before his death, bequeath a part of his

property, not exceeding one-third, to such of his relations as have been debarred by Law from inheriting from him, for instance, distant but deserving relations, non-Muslim parents, non-Muslim children and so on. In such a case the remaining two-thirds will go to his lawful heirs. As to the restriction relating to one-third, it may be noted that the Holy Prophet has made it clear that no testator can bequeath more than one-third of his wealth to others than the lawful heirs. At least two-thirds of the property must go to the heirs (Bukhārī).

Islam excludes non-Muslim relatives from the category of heirs to avoid complications. For instance, the near relatives of a deceased person might belong to a people who are at war with the Muslims or in open hostility toward them. In that case, to put money into their hands would be to damage the cause of Islam and injure one's own interests. Non-Muslim relatives have, therefore, been excluded from lawful heirs so that they may not claim their part of the inheritance as of right. The Quran, however, instructs Muslims to leave to them a part of their property by a special will, so that, in case such property is not likely to be used against the interests of Islam, the former may in this way discharge the obligations they owe to the latter as kinsmen. Another reason for excluding non-Muslim relatives from the category of heirs is that generally non-Muslims do not in practice allow their Muslim relatives to succeed them as heirs. There is no sense, therefore, in allowing Muslim wealth to flow to non-Muslims where no such flow takes place the other way.

The verse serves yet another purpose. According to the Law of Islam, as generally accepted, the grandchild of a deceased Muslim is debarred from inheritance in case the former's father has predeceased the latter. The Quran, therefore, directs that a portion of the property may be left by a special will by a dying Muslim for such of his relatives

182. And he who alters it after he has heard it, the sin thereof shall surely lie on those who alter it. Surely Allah is All-Hearing and All-Knowing.¹⁸⁸

فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
يُبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾

183. But whoso apprehends from a testator a partiality or a wrong, and makes peace between them (the parties affected), it shall be no sin for him. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving and Merciful.¹⁸⁹

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مَوْصٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ
فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾

as are otherwise rightful heirs but cannot inherit owing to some of their near kinsmen having predeceased them.

The verse must not be understood to lend itself to the interpretation that the heirs whose portions have been definitely fixed by the Law can be given more than their prescribed share. This is expressly forbidden by the Holy Prophet (Tirmidhī, ch. on *Waṣāyā*).

188. Commentary :

If a person makes a will in compliance with the above commandment, but his heirs, finding it to be prejudicial to their interests, alter it or hinder its execution, the blame and the responsibility for consequences will lie on those who tamper with the will and not on the maker of the will. Apparently, the verse seems to be superfluous; for what it says is obvious, i.e., the responsibility of any subsequent alteration cannot lie on the testator. But deeper consideration would show the futility of such an idea. In fact, the verse serves three important purposes. *Firstly*, it warns the testator that fear of any subsequent alteration should not deter him from making the will. *Secondly*, that he should act intelligently and cautiously and should try to foresee and forestall all possible mischief by his heirs. *Thirdly*, the verse warns the heirs and their friends that any alteration made by them in

the will will bring them under the wrath of God Who is All-Knowing.

189. Important Words :

جَنَفَ (partiality) is the infinitive noun from جَنَفَ. They say جَنَفَ عَنْ الطَّرِيقِ meaning, he deviated from the right path. جَنَفَ فِي رَمِيهِ means, he acted wrongfully in his will. جَانَفَ أَهْلَهُ means, he kept away from his family out of anger and not for a just cause. تَجَانَفَ لِأَثَمٍ means, he inclined towards sin. So جَنَفَ means: (1) inclining to sin, etc., (2) deviating from the right course; (3) acting unjustly or wrongfully; (4) keeping away from rightful things (Aqrab).

Commentary :

If someone should have reason to fear that the testator is showing undue favour to any particular person or party, or that he is acting contrary to Islamic Law, it would be no sin for him to bring about reconciliation between the parties concerned by removing the cause of displeasure or disagreement between the testator and his heirs and thereby having the will altered in accordance with the requirements of justice and Islamic Law. The words, *it shall be no sin for him*, do not mean that such pious intervention is simply an act of negative virtue. The expression has been used lest, in view of what has been

- R. 23 184. O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.¹⁹⁰

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ
عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

said in the preceding verse regarding the sinfulness of the act of alteration in a will, some over-cautious people should hold aloof even when they see an unjust inclination on the part of the testator. The verse thus really means that such an interference, far from being an act of sin, is an act of virtue which is sure to draw God's mercy.

The concluding clause reminds the testator that God is Forgiving, so that if he mends his error, He will be pleased to forgive him. The declaration that God is Merciful, also serves as an inducement to other Muslims to intervene, if it is felt that the testator is unduly partial to one party, to the detriment of the other. In that case they should readily step in and set things right, for which God would give them an ample portion out of His mercy. Thus the word *غفور* (Most Forgiving) relates to such testators as return to the right course when reminded to do so, and the word *رحيم* (Merciful) relates to those persons who succeed in persuading the testator to revert to the path of rectitude and justice.

190. Important Words:

الصيام (Fasting) is derived from *صام* meaning, he kept back or refrained from doing something; or he refrained from eating or drinking or talking or walking, etc. The Arabs say *صامت الريح* i.e. the wind became calm or motionless. *فرس صام* means, a horse from which food has been withheld, or a horse which is confined to its manger and not made to walk or race. Thus *صيام* means: (1) keeping back or refraining from something; (2) refraining from eating and drinking, etc; and (3) formally refraining from eating, drinking, going in unto wives, etc. i.e. fasting from dawn till sunset

as ordained by Islam. *صام* is one who so refrains from food, etc. i.e., one who keeps a fast (Aqrah & Mufradāt). An interesting feature of the Arabic language is revealed when we notice that the word *صامت* though derived from a different root, yet, owing to its having two root letters common with *صيام*, gives a somewhat similar meaning, for, whereas *صيام* means, refraining from food, drink or speech, *صامت* means: (1) refraining from speech; and (2) intensity of thirst, the latter state being the direct result of refraining from drink (Aqrah).

Commentary:

As the preceding verses contain a reference to patience in trials and sacrifices as well as refraining from disputes and temptations, the Quran here fittingly turns to the subject of fasting, which is a most effective means of self-discipline.

The command to fast, whatever its details, is to be found in most religions in one form or another. The early devotions and fasting of Buddha (see *Lalitavistara* & *Buddhacharita*), the fasting of Moses, prior to his receiving the Ten Commandments (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9), the fasts of Jesus before his receiving the heavenly Call (Matt. 4:2), all testify to the importance of this institution. In fact, fasting is a form of devotion and self-discipline which has a natural appeal to man. "By the greater number of religions," says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "in the lower, middle and higher cultures alike, fasting is largely prescribed: and when it is not required, it is nevertheless practised to some extent by individuals in response to the promptings of nature." The verse under comment, however, does not mean that fasting has been prescribed for the Muslims

in the same form in which it was prescribed for the people of earlier faiths. Islam has greatly spiritualised this institution by attaching to it a number of highly useful regulations and restrictions.

The clause, *so that you may become righteous*, explains the deep philosophy underlying the commandment relating to fasting. It is a special characteristic of the Quran that, whenever it gives an important commandment, it does not give it arbitrarily but also explains its usefulness so that the addressee may be convinced of, and satisfied about, the wisdom underlying it. The object of صيام or fasting has been stated in this verse as the attainment of تقوى i.e. righteousness.

As explained in 2:3 the word اتقا or تقوى from which the word تتقون used in the present verse is derived means, to guard oneself against (1) harm and suffering, and (2) evil and sin. Thus the verse points out that the real object of fasting is, first, to be saved from harm and suffering, and secondly, to be saved from sin and evil.

The first object is attained through fasting in two ways: (1) When a man commits evil deeds and becomes deserving of God's punishment on account of those deeds, but later feels ashamed of them and turns to God in repentance, then fasting serves as an atonement for his sins. (2) Fasting not only makes a man fit and able to bear hardships but also makes him realize the sufferings of his brethren in distress and feel sympathy for them. Thus fasting goes a long way to remove and minimize the pains and sufferings of humanity.

The second object, viz., that of being saved from sin and evil, is attained through fasting because, while fasting, a person has not only to abandon eating and drinking but also, to a certain extent, to keep himself aloof from worldly connections and to abstain from indulging in his desires, with the result that his thoughts naturally tend towards spiritual

things. Spiritual men of all religions unanimously testify, on the basis of personal experience, that a certain degree of severance from physical relations and worldly connections is essential for spiritual advancement and has a powerful purifying effect on the mind. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that to carry such severance too far is sure to weaken the body to such an undesirable extent as to render a person unfit not only to fulfil his social and religious obligations but also to withstand temptations which requires a certain amount of strength. Islam, therefore, follows the path of the golden mean. While it does prescribe a certain degree of abstention from material pleasures, it does not permit such a weakening of the body as should incapacitate it for performing its normal functions. This is why the Holy Prophet has forbidden continuous fasting, saying, "Your self has a claim upon you and your family has a claim upon you and your guests have a claim upon you" (Tirmidhī). On another occasion, he is reported to have said, "Verily, I am the most righteous of you all, yet sometimes I fast and sometimes I abstain from fasting, and so must you do" (Bukhārī).

Fasting also stands as a symbol for complete sacrifice. One who fasts not only abstains from food and drink, which are the chief means of sustenance and without which one cannot live, but also from going in unto one's wife which is the means of assuring one's future race. Thus he who fasts really expresses his readiness, if need be, to sacrifice his all for the sake of truth. Fasting indeed affords a wonderful training ground for man.

It must also be noted here that this verse does not actually contain a command to fast, which follows in the verse coming after the succeeding verse. It only prepares Muslims for the coming commandment by saying that (1) the fasting which is going to be prescribed for them is not a new

185. *The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation—the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.*¹⁹¹

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى
سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ
فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ
لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩١﴾

a2 : 204.

thing but was also prescribed for the people that had gone before, and that (2) it is a most useful thing which is sure to benefit them greatly. It will be seen that very often the Quran does not give a commandment all of a sudden but first prepares the ground for it by making some general remarks. In this connection see also 2 : 143—145 where a similar process has been adopted.

191. Important Words :

يطيقونه (are able to fast only with great difficulty) is derived from طاق. They say طاق الشيء or طاق الشيء meaning, he was able or fit to do it ; or he had the strength and power to do it (Aqrab). But the word طاق is not used of strength generally but of such strength only as, so to speak, lies on the border i.e. just the strength with which a thing may be done and no more—a strength required to do a thing only with difficulty and trouble (Mufradāt & Lane). This is why the word طاق is never used to express the power of God for which words like قدرة and قوة are used ; for whereas the latter two words express the sense of vastness of power, the former expresses only that of its narrowness. The Quran uses the word طاق only twice and at both these places it uses it in a negative sentence i.e. لا طاق لنا viz., “we do not even possess the requisite strength to do that” (2 : 250 & 287). Thus the correct rendering of the clause على الذين يطيقونه would be, “for

those who are able to fast but can fast only with great difficulty.” طوقه (Tawwaqahū) which is from the same root means, he put a collar or a neck-ring round his neck, i.e., he imposed on him a thing that was difficult, troublesome or inconvenient. طاق also means, a single strand which after combining with others goes to make a rope (Lane) i.e. the weak part of a rope which cannot stand tension alone.

فدية (an expiation) is derived from فدى. They say فدى الرجل meaning, the man secured his release from captivity, etc. by paying his ransom. Thus فدية means, such payment as is made for obtaining release of a person ; or such expenditure as is made in expiation of some sin or shortcoming, etc. (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse again refrains from giving the actual commandment regarding fasting but prepares further ground by pointing out that the fasting about to be prescribed is not meant for all days but only for a limited number of days. Again, the commandment to come is not meant to be observed in all circumstances ; for those suffering from disease or those on a journey will be exempt from it. In fact, Islam is a practical religion. It does not give any commandment which is impossible of compliance. Hence, while referring to its injunctions about fasting, the Quran makes it clear that whosoever is ill or is on a journey should not fast but should redeem the omission by fasting

186. The month of Ramaḍān is that in which the Quran was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and "discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present *at home* in this month, let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, *shall fast* the same number of other days. Allah desires to give you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may complete the number, and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful.¹⁹²

شَهْرَ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى
لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ
مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى
سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ
الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ
وَلِتُكْبِتُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

a2: 186; 3: 4; 8: 42; 21: 49; 25: 2. b2: 287; 5: 7; 22: 79. c22: 38.

an equal number of days at some other time when the sickness is gone or the journey is over.

The pronoun الذين (those) in the clause, *those who are able*, refers to believers in general, the words الذين يطيقونه meaning, those who are able to fast but can fast only with great difficulty. This interpretation is supported by another reading of the verse in which the word يطوقونه (yuṭawwaqūnahū) has been substituted for يطيقونه (yuṭiqūnahū) (Jarīr), the former word meaning, those to whom fasting is like a tight collar, i.e., those who are not actually sick but whose physical condition or general health is such that they are unable to fast without running the risk of injuring their health. Such people, who include old men and raw youths and weakly persons and pregnant women and mothers giving suck to their children, may not fast but should make amends for their non-observance of each day's fast by feeding a poor man according to their standard of food. Another reading of the word يطيقونه is يطيقونه (yuṭayyaqūnahū) (Jarīr) meaning, they can do it only with great difficulty, which also bears out the above meaning. Thus the verse mentions three classes of believers to whom concession is allowed with respect to fasting: (1) the sick; (2) those on a journey; and (3) those neither on a

journey nor actually sick but otherwise too weak to fast except with real risk to their health.

Some Commentators do not recognize the last-mentioned class as being separate from, and independent of, the first two, but take it as being an exception from them. In this case the verse would mean that such of the sick and of those on a journey as can afford to feed poor men should also do so, besides fasting the same number of days after the sickness or the state of journey is over.

192. Important Words:

رمضان (Ramaḍān) is the name given to the ninth month of the lunar year. The word is derived from the verb رمض. They say رمض النهار i.e. the day became intensely hot. رمض الرجل means, the man had his feet burnt by the earth which had become intensely heated by the sun. رمض الصائم means, his inside became very hot with thirst owing to fasting. ارتعض من الحزن means, he began to burn, i.e., he was greatly distressed, with grief and sorrow. الرمض means, the first rain of autumn which finds the earth hot and burning (Aqrab & Lane). The month of رمضان is so named because (1) fasting in this month causes heat and burning due to thirst; (2) worship and devotion in this month burns away the traces of sin in man, this signification

being corroborated by a saying of the Holy Prophet ('Asākir and Merdawaih as quoted by Fath al-Qadir); and (3) its devotions produce in the heart of man the necessary warmth of love for his Creator and his fellow-beings. The name رمضان is of Islamic origin, the former name of the month being ناطق (Muḥiṭ & Māwardī, as quoted by Fath al-Qadir).

القرآن (the Quran) is the name given by God Himself to the Book revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam, containing the final Law for mankind. The word is derived from قرأ. They say قرأ الكتاب meaning: (1) he read the book i.e. he read it to himself; or (2) he recited the book i.e. he read it aloud so that others might hear it; قرأ also means, he conveyed or delivered a message, etc., as they say اقرأ عليه السلام meaning, convey or deliver my *salam* to him; (3) قرأ الشيء means, he collected or drew together the thing; (4) قرأت المرأة means, the woman became pregnant and brought forth a child (Aqrab & Lane). Thus قرآن (Quran) means: (1) a book which is meant to be read. The Quran is indeed the most widely read book in the world (Enc. Brit. 11th edition, article on Koran by Nöldeke); (2) a book or message which is meant to be conveyed and delivered to other peoples. The Quran is indeed the only revealed Book whose delivery or message is absolutely unrestricted; for whereas all other Books are meant for specific times and specific peoples, the Quran is meant for all times and all peoples (34:29; also Bukhārī); (3) a Book which comprises and has collected in itself all truth; the Quran is indeed a storehouse of knowledge which not only comprises all eternal truths revealed in previous Books (98:4) but also all such truths as mankind may stand in need of at any time and in any circumstances (18:50); (4) a Book which contains not only visible truth which may be seen and felt by all but, like a pregnant woman big with child, it contains truths that lie hidden from the eyes of most men and, like a new-born

child, come to light only as and when time ripens (15:22). All these meanings are not only expressive of an existing state of affairs but also serve as mighty prophecies the truth of which has been established in all ages.

Commentary:

The ground having been suitably prepared in the preceding two verses, this verse gives the awaited commandment about fasting. But even here the actual commandment is preceded by a suitable description of the month of Ramaḍān in which fasts were to be observed. The month was not chosen arbitrarily but was selected for the purpose of fasting because it was a sacred month in which the Quran was revealed. And the Quran is not an ordinary book. It is a Book full of right guidance and of bright Signs and of things that help to differentiate between truth and falsehood. This sublime foreword placed before the commandment about fasting contains an implied question to the effect: Will you not now fast when fasting is a tried thing, when it is so useful, when it is to be observed only for a few days, when even in these few days suitable facilities have been provided, and lastly when these few days correspond with a month which is full of blessings?

As hinted above, this verse mentions the reason for which the month of Ramaḍān was selected for the purpose of fasting. It was in this month that the Quran was revealed. The revelation of the Quran in the month of Ramaḍān may mean two things: (1) that the revelation of the Holy Book commenced in the month of Ramaḍān, for it is on record that it was on the 24th of Ramaḍān that the Holy Prophet received his first revelation (Musnad & Jarīr); (2) that the revelation of the Quran was repeated to the Holy Prophet every year in the month of Ramaḍān, for it is also on record that the angel Gabriel rehearsed every year to the Holy Prophet the whole of the revealed portion of the Quran during this month

and this he continued to do till the very year of the Prophet's death (Bukhārī, ch. on *Manāqib*). Thus in a way even the whole of the Quran may be said to have been sent down in Ramaḍān.

The words, *clear proofs of guidance and discrimination*, point out that the Quran is a Book which is not content with making mere assertions. It supports every assertion it makes with necessary reasons and arguments which are both clear and convincing, and it also adduces heavenly Signs which go to discriminate right from wrong with such clearness that they leave no room for doubt. This excellence belongs exclusively to the Quran. Indeed, other scriptures, too have been spoken of as "a light and guidance," but about none of them has it been said that they supply reasons, arguments and Signs in support of their assertions.

Although former Prophets also were given Signs that people might accept them as divine Messengers, yet the scriptures they brought contained nothing that might bear testimony to their truth. It is only the Quran that contains all kinds of evidence—rational, scriptural and heavenly—to demonstrate the truth of its teachings so that it might itself furnish necessary evidence of its truth, and that, unlike other scriptures, tales and stories of the past might not form its sole support.

The clause, *let him fast therein*, signifies that it is necessary to fast all the days of the month of Ramaḍān; it will not do to fast only for a few days. Thus out of every twelve months in the year one at least—that of Ramaḍān—must be so devoted to the worship of God.

The clause, *whoso is sick or is on a journey, he shall fast the same number of other days*, at first appears to be an unnecessary repetition of what has already been said in the preceding verse in identical words, but really it is not so; for whereas in the previous verse this clause formed part of a verse that was meant to prepare the ground for the commandment to

fast, in this verse it forms part of the actual commandment. The clause signifies that if in the month of Ramaḍān one happens to be sick or is on a journey, one should not fast, owing to the extra hardship entailed, but should fast the same number of other days when one has recovered from sickness or when the journey is over. The Quran, however, wisely refrains from defining the terms "sickness" and "journey," leaving them to be defined by the common usage of the people.

The clause, *He desires not hardship for you*, points to the very important principle that divine commands are not meant to cause trouble or inconvenience but to afford ease and facility. In this connection it may well be noted that St. Paul looks upon the Law as an entanglement with "the yoke of bondage" if not as an actual curse (Gal. chs. 3 and 5). But he forgets that true freedom, and for that matter, true happiness lie only in willing obedience to a good and righteous legislation. The Islamic law, even "in meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnal ordinances," is a real help and guidance rather than a hindrance and a bondage.

The clause, *so that you may complete the number*, indicates that God's purpose in prescribing a fixed number of days is that believers may be able to complete the number which, in His sight, is essential for their spiritual welfare. A fixed number was essential; for, otherwise, some people might have failed to fast even the minimum number, while others would have unduly suffered for doubt as to their having completed the necessary number even after they had long exceeded it.

The clause, *that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you*, points to yet another object underlying the commandment. All such expressions in which the offering of a particular praise to God is enjoined signify two things: (1) that man being God's creation should continuously offer praise to Him, invoking the particular divine attribute that may suit the

187. And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: "I am near. ^bI answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.¹⁹³

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِلَعَلِّهِمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

all : 62 ; 34 : 51 ; 50 : 17. 627 : 63.

occasion ; (2) that he should also try to reflect in his person the self-same attribute of God. "Exalting God" would therefore mean not only God's glorification but the uplift and exaltation of the devotee himself. In fact God stands in need of no praise. He is what He is whether we praise Him or not. So truly speaking, everything is for the benefit of man himself, and the benefit underlying fasting is the exaltation of man, morally and spiritually and in a sense physically as well.

The final clause, *that you may be grateful*, is also full of deep meaning. God is not cruel or unkind ; He has due regard for our weaknesses and He does not put us to unnecessary trouble ; and whatever seeming trouble He puts us to is for our own good. This kind and loving attitude of God towards us ought to give rise to a corresponding feeling of love for Him in our hearts and we ought to feel grateful to Him for His love and kindness.

To a superficial observer the language of the Quran as used in this verse might appear to be rather unconnected, forming independent clauses. But a closer study reveals a beautiful arrangement between them. In fact the four clauses in the concluding portion of this verse furnish reasons for the four commandments contained in the first portion of the verse, the succeeding reasons following the reversed order of the preceding commandments in a most natural manner. The first reason given by the verse is contained in the clause, *Allah desires to give you facility and He desires not hardship*

for you. Though the apparent wording of this clause is different from the wordings of the succeeding clauses, actually it is also one of those that supply a reason, for in reality the clause stands like this, "that you be afforded facility, etc." Corresponding to this clause we have the last commandment of the verse i.e. *whoso is sick or is on a journey*, etc. The second clause supplying a reason is, *that you may complete the number*, corresponding to which we have the commandment, *whosoever of you is present at home in this month, let him fast therein*, hinting that God means the Muslims to fast the whole month. The third clause supplying a reason is, *that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you*. Corresponding to this we have the words, *a guidance for mankind*, etc. Finally comes the clause, *that you may be grateful*, corresponding to which we have the clause, *the month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was sent down*, hinting that the wise God has chosen the most sacred and the most blessed part of the year for fasting so that you may be doubly benefited by it. Such figure of speech in which parts of a sentence correspond with others occurring in the same sentence in a reverse order, the first clause of the former group corresponding with the last clause of the latter, is known in Arabic rhetoric as *لف و نشر معكوس* (Mutawwal).

193. Important Words :

اجيب (I answer) and فليستجيبوا (they should hearken) are both derived from the same root جاب meaning, he cut a cloth, etc. اجابه means,

he answered him or answered his question. اجابت الارض means, the earth brought forth its vegetation, i.e., responded to sowing. استجاب means, he answered him or responded to him. استجاب له means, he obeyed him or complied with his wish and did what he was asked to do (Aqrab & Lane).

رشد (may follow the right way) is derived from رشد meaning, he was rightly guided and became steadfast in his guidance; he took or followed the right way. رشد (rushd) and رشاد (rashad) mean, true guidance; following the right way with firmness and steadfastness; rectitude; maturity of intellect. رشيد and راشد mean, one who is rightly guided, one who takes or follows the right way. رشيد is more intensive of the two and is also applied to God when it means, "Director to the right way; One Who follows a perfect course in His decrees" (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

When the Faithful came to know of the blessings of the month of Ramaḍān and of fasting therein, they naturally became eager to derive as much benefit from it as possible and asked the Holy Prophet as to the particular attitude of God in this month i.e. whether He came nearer to His servants in respect of grace and mercy, and whether He accepted more prayers in Ramaḍān and so on. The verse provides an answer to this question.

The words, *My servants*, do not obviously refer to all people but to only such men as believe in God and are willing to obey Him, particularly Muslims who follow His commandments regarding Prayers, Fasting, etc. In fact atheists or, for that matter, rebellious people are never spoken of as "My servants" in the Quran.

The clause, *I am near*, does not, and indeed cannot, refer to bodily nearness. The preceding verses told us that the command to fast was given with a view to purifying us, and that in

giving it God desired our own welfare and meant no torture. The conception of such a loving God naturally creates the desire in the minds of all men to attain spiritual nearness to Him. Hence the present verse contains the glad tidings that access to God is not beyond human power nor is His nearness the monopoly of any particular people. The attainment of union with Him is within the reach of every man and woman, and the door of His mercy and grace is also open to all.

The words, *I answer the prayers of the suppliant*, point to the fact that it is not only the true believers and the righteous who have their prayers accepted by God but that God hears and accepts the prayers of all. As a matter of fact, the acceptance of prayer is an expression of God's grace and mercy which encompass Muslims as well as non-Muslims. It would be unjust to think that God, Who is "the Lord of the worlds," accepts the prayers of Muslims alone. It is natural, however, that He should show greater favour to those who obey Him and hold fast to truth and act righteously. He therefore listens more to their prayers than to those of others, and He certainly rejects such prayers as are offered against His beloved ones. Nor does He accept such prayers as may lead to results that are detrimental to the cause of truth. But He is the Lord of all and listens to all.

The clause, *so they should hearken to Me*, means that they should believe in God (for without believing there can be no hearkening, and no response to His calls) and obey Him. God promises acceptance of prayers to "His servants" but He also expects that His creatures should believe in Him and obey His commandments. This will make their prayers all the more entitled to acceptance.

The words, *and believe in Me*, do not here refer to a belief in the existence of God; for this idea is included in the preceding clause, *they should hearken to Me*,

it being impossible that one should hearken to God and obey His commandments without believing in His existence. The words, *believe in Me*, therefore refer here to belief in the power of God to accept prayers and belief in the fact that if appealed to, He will certainly come to our help.

The final clause, *that they may follow the right way*, means that if men would act upon the guidance contained in this commandment they would (1) attain God's nearness, and (2) find God inclined to accept their prayers more and more.

But as with all other things, there are limitations and conditions attached to the acceptance of prayers also, to some of which the verse under comment refers. They may be briefly stated as follows :—

(1) One should be a servant of God, accepting His dominion over him and worshipping Him alone, as the words, *My servants*, indicate.

(2) One should call on God alone for help and turn to no other being or thing opposed to Him, as the words, *when he prays to Me*, show. There are indeed many who, while seemingly praying to God, put their real trust in other things or sometimes even turn to false deities for help. Such men cannot expect their prayers to be accepted.

(3) One should hearken to God's call, *i.e.*, not only believe in Him but also obey His commandments, accepting His Messengers and acting righteously in accordance with His Law, as the words, *hearken to Me*, point out.

(4) One should have firm belief in the fact that God not only has the power to accept one's prayers but would actually accept them if one could only persist in asking, as the words

believe in Me, signify. There are indeed many who pray for a time and then get tired of it. These really do not believe; for if they had believed, they would willingly have waited. Says the Holy Prophet: "God would accept one's prayer if only one did not show impatience, by saying, 'I have prayed and I have not been answered'" (Muslim).

(5) The prayers of those who are rebellious against God, rejecting His commandments and opposing His will, are not accepted, particularly such prayers in which something against His will or something likely to injure the cause of His beloved ones is solicited. Says God: "The prayer of the rebellious ones is nothing but wasted" (40:51).

A saying of the Holy Prophet very beautifully explains the philosophy of prayer. He is reported to have said: "Every Muslim who prays to God and whose prayer does not consist in anything which is a sin *i.e.* anything against God's will or against His commandments or against His way, or anything which involves an injustice or unkindness to a relative, will have his prayer accepted. But the acceptance of prayer may take three forms: (a) either God will grant to the supplicant his request in this very life; or (b) He will store the thing for him in the next; or (c) He will ward off a like evil from him" (Bukhārī).

The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement says: "God treats His servants like friends. A friend would sometimes accept the request of his friend and would sometimes expect him to accept his will. So does God. But even when God seemingly rejects the prayer of a believer, He is very often acting in his interests" (Haqīqat, p. 19).

188. It is made lawful for you to go in unto your wives on the night of the fast. They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them. Allah knows that you have been acting unjustly to yourselves, wherefore He has turned to you with mercy and afforded you relief. So you may now go in unto them and seek what Allah has ordained for you; and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn. Then complete the fast till nightfall and do not go in unto them while you remain in the mosques for devotion. These are the limits fixed by Allah, so approach them not. Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to men that they may become secure against evil.¹⁹⁴

أَجَلْ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى الْيَلِّ وَلَا تَبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لِنَاسٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

194. Important Words :

رفت (going in unto) has a number of meanings : amatory talk, kissing, caressing, embracing, compressing, coition, etc. ; in fact, everything that a man desires of his wife. When رفت is followed by the preposition الى it means, coition or going in unto one's wife, and it is in this sense that the word has been used here. رفت also means, immodest, foul and lewd talk or speech (Lane).

تَخَانُونَ (you have been acting unjustly) is derived from خان. They say خانه i.e. he acted unfaithfully or perfidiously towards him; he was not faithful to the trust reposed in him. اختانه is like خانه, giving the same meaning. It also means, he acted wrongfully or unjustly towards him. The Arabs say خانه رجلاه i.e. his feet or legs acted unfaithfully towards him, meaning he was unable to walk. تَخَانُونَ would, therefore, mean, you failed to give your souls (i.e. yourselves) their due

either (1) by preventing them from their duty to God, or (2) by refusing them the satisfaction of their natural and lawful cravings. The former act is a sin, while the latter, though not a sin, may endanger one's health or deprive one of just happiness. The word has been used in both these senses in the Quran. In 4 : 108, it has been used in the sense of "sin", while in the present verse it has been used in the sense of "depriving the soul of the gratification of its natural and just desires."

عفا عنهم (afforded you relief). The word عفا gives a number of meanings (see 2 : 53). The expression عفا الله عن فلان is sometimes used where there is no question of pardoning any sin or obliterating traces thereof but simply in the sense of removing one's mistake or misunderstanding or improving one's condition or bestowing honour on one (Aqrab). It also means, making things easy i.e. affording relief (Muhit).

بشر (go in unto them) is derived from بشر meaning, glad tidings. The expression بشر به means, he became glad and happy because of that. The words بشر الجلد mean, he removed or peeled off its skin. البشرة means, outer part of skin, or what is visible of the face or body. باشر المرأة means, he came in contact with his wife skin to skin; he went in unto her. البشري (glad tidings) is so called because it changes the colour of the listener's face. البشر (man) is also so called because, unlike other animals, man's skin is visible and not concealed under hair (Aqrah, Mufradāt & Lane).

Commentary :

It was a custom among the Israelites to abstain from all kinds of food from one evening to the other on the occasion of the fast of the Atonement Day, the only fast prescribed by Moses for his people. When fasts were first prescribed for Muslims, and details had not yet been revealed, they thought that, like the Jews, they too would have to fast for 24 hours with a slight intervening breakfast. Hence, following their own judgement, they concluded that it was lawful for them to eat and drink and to go in unto their wives only as long as they did not go to bed, and that after they had gone to sleep, they were not allowed to partake of any food or drink or to go in unto their wives until the next evening. Bukhārī gives the following tradition on the authority of Barā'; "When the command to fast was revealed, if anybody kept a fast and then went to sleep in the evening, he abstained from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse until the time for breaking the fast the following day" (Bukhārī ch. on *Saum*). This tradition and others of the same import show that it was not in obedience to any command from God or the Holy Prophet that his Companions abstained from sexual intercourse after going to bed at night, but it was owing to their own imitation

of similar customs among the People of the Book that they had imposed these restrictions on themselves. As, however, these restrictions were against the will of God, a revelation was soon sent down allowing the Faithful to eat and drink and approach their wives as they liked during the night; only they were forbidden to do so while fasting during the day.

Some Commentators have inferred from the words, *you have been acting unjustly to yourselves*, that the Companions of the Holy Prophet were unable to act upon the commandment to abstain from intercourse with their wives during the nights of fasts and frequently broke it. But this is evidently wrong, for the good reason that there was no such commandment to be broken. Moreover, the words of the Quran *i.e. you may now go in*, also belie this interpretation, for the use of the word "now" clearly indicates that the Companions of the Holy Prophet were erring not on the side of indulgence but on that of abstinence. The Quran could not obviously say, *you may now go in*, to a people who were already going in unto their wives.

The clause, *they are a garment for you and you are a garment for them*, very beautifully describes the object of marriage. The verse points out that the object of marriage is not the gratification of carnal passions. The real object is the comfort, protection and embellishment of the parties, for such are the uses of a garment as explained in 7 : 27 & 16 : 82. Thus in a very few words, the Quran has described the true relationship that should exist between husband and wife, a description which has hardly a parallel in any other scripture.

The clause, *the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread of the dawn*, does not refer to the thread made of yarn but to the streak of light that appears along the eastern horizon at the time of dawn. The verse enjoins that from dawn till sunset Muslims should abstain

189. And "do not devour your wealth among yourselves through falsehood, and offer it not as bribe to the authorities that you may knowingly devour a part of the wealth of other people with injustice."¹⁹⁵

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْنُوا بِهَا
إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ
وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ١٨٩

41 : 30, 162 ; 9 : 34.

from food and drink and intercourse while fasting. But they are free to have recourse to these things between sunset and dawn. At places where days and nights are unusually long *i.e.* nearer the poles, calculation should be made for the purpose of fasting on the basis of average conditions *i.e.* in such a case day and night would each be supposed to be of twelve hours' duration. (Muslim, ch. on *Ashrāt-al-Sā'at*).

The clause, *while you remain in the mosques for devotion*, refers to the practice of اعتكاف which is observed by remaining in the mosque, night and day, during the last ten days of Ramaḍān. During these days, the devotee who decides to observe اعتكاف is not to leave the mosque except from human necessity *i.e.* to answer a call of nature, etc. He enters the mosque on the morning of the 20th of Ramaḍān and abides therein till the end of the month, fasting from daybreak to sunset and occupying himself in prayer or recitation of the Quran or other religious study or meditation. During اعتكاف (*I'tikāf*), which is, as it were, the consummation of the spirit of fasting, intercourse with wives and preliminaries thereto are not allowed even at night time.

The clause, *these are the limits fixed by Allah, so approach them not*, points to the very important principle that a man can attain true piety only if he refrains from even "approaching" the things that have been forbidden by God. "Some acts," says the Holy Prophet "are of doubtful character, one

not knowing whether they are right or wrong. It is always better to avoid these. The forbidden things are like a pasture-land which the Wise God prohibits to the people. If you make your beasts graze on the borders of such land, *i.e.*, allow your beasts to approach near them, there is danger of their trespassing upon the prohibited area" (Bukhārī, ch. on *Imān*). This is an extremely wise injunction which cuts at the root of all trespass. Only those can protect themselves against sin who give all unlawful things a wide berth.

The final clause, *that they may become secure against evil*, repeats the idea contained in 2:184 in which the subject of fasting was first introduced. In both verses the underlying object of fasting has been stated to be the attainment of تقوى *i.e.* piety, righteousness and protection against evil, which are all different forms of divine blessings. The reader may, with advantage, compare this idea with the belief of the Christians that the Law is a curse (Gal. 3 : 10, 13).

195. Important Words :

تدلو (offer it) is derived from ادلى which again is derived from دلا. They say دلا الدلو meaning, he let down the bucket (into the well), or he pulled it up. ادلى means, he let down the bucket (into the well.) ادلى الىه means, he offered or gave him money (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The commandment relating to fasting enjoined Muslims to refrain from lawful eating and

- R. 24 190. They ask thee about the new moons. Say, "They are means for measuring time for the *general good* of mankind and for the Pilgrimage." And it is not righteousness that you come into houses by the backs thereof; but ^{truly} righteous is he who fears God. And you should come into houses by the doors thereof; and fear Allah that you may prosper.¹⁹⁶

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْاِهْلَةِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ
وَالْحَجِّ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِاَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا
وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَآتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ اَبْوَابِهَا
وَاثْقُوا لِلّٰهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

a2 : 198 ; 9 : 36. b2 : 178.

drinking within specified periods with a view to attaining piety and righteousness. This was thus the most opportune time to remind the people that unlawful eating i.e. unlawful acquisition of wealth, must be all the more scrupulously avoided.

Indeed, one of the greatest evils prevailing in the world is the practice of devouring other men's property by means of falsehood, fraud and litigation. Many a sin is nothing but an offshoot of this evil. Islam condemns the practice of taking another man's property without his knowledge or consent. Similarly, it is unlawful to appropriate another person's possessions by means of false litigation. If a man takes possession of a property that does not belong to him by right, it will prove the ruin of him, even if a court of justice should decree the property as his. Says the Holy Prophet: "Beware! I am but a man like you and it sometimes happens that a litigant comes to me and he is more eloquent than his opponent, and I, after listening to his arguments, may give my decision in his favour. But if the property is really not his, my decision will not make it his in the sight of God; in that case it is nothing but a piece of burning fire; so let him put this fire into his belly if he likes, or let him leave it" (Bukhārī).

The verse cuts at the root of the evil that has made its appearance in the present age even

among those who lay claim to culture and enlightenment. People generally do not deem it worth while to consider what right is. All that is seen is how the judge decides. When a judge awards a property to a man, he eagerly takes possession of it without the slightest compunction, even if it happens not to belong to him by right. It never occurs to him that in the sight of God he is no less a usurper than he who forcibly seizes another man's property.

Incidentally the verse also forcefully condemns the practice of the giving and taking of bribe which unfortunately is so rampant nowadays. In many countries justice has actually to be bought. What is still worse is that through this evil practice the door of justice is often closed to a rightful owner. The practice is to be found even in some advanced Western countries and is said to be prevalent in certain parts of the New World. The Holy Prophet has condemned it in the strongest of terms saying: "The taker and giver of a bribe are alike, and both stand accursed" (Tirmidhī).

196. Important Words:

الاهلة (new moons) is the plural of الهلال i.e. the new moon. The word is generally used about the moon of the first two or three nights. About the moon of other nights the word used is قمر (Aqrab).

مواقيت (means for measuring time) is the plural of مِيقَات which is derived from وقت, i.e. time. مِيقَات means: (1) time; (2) time fixed or appointed for a certain thing; (3) a promise for which a time is fixed; (4) a place in which a meeting is appointed to take place at a particular time (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

When the Companions of the Holy Prophet heard of the great blessings of the month of Ramaḍān, they naturally desired to know the blessings attending other months. This question on their part shows how solicitous they were to win God's blessings and attain His nearness.

The clause, *they are means for measuring time*, should not give rise to the misunderstanding that Islam looks upon the moon only as a means of measuring time; for elsewhere the Quran speaks of the sun also as such (6 : 97 and 17 : 13). In fact, Islam has made use of both the lunar and solar systems for measuring time. Where worship is to be performed in different parts of the day the solar system of reckoning time is used, as in the five daily Prayers or for the opening and the closing of a daily fast; and where worship is to be connected with a particular month or part thereof, the lunar system is used, as in selecting the month of fasting or the appointment of the time of Pilgrimage, etc. As a matter of fact, as religious commandments are meant for the general public, the system used is always such as may be easily understandable by the common people. All commandments relating to a fixed time are therefore based on the visible part of the solar or the lunar system of reckoning time, as the case may be. Changes in the position of the sun during the day are visible but the beginning of

a solar month is not visible. On the other hand, the appearance of a new moon in the beginning of a lunar month is visible. Therefore Islam has made use of both; and the solar system is as much Islamic as the lunar system.

The clause, *and it is not righteousness that you come into houses by the backs thereof*, points to a very important principle that the real purpose in appointing different acts of worship is the intrinsic usefulness thereof and not that to each change of time there should be attached an act of worship. Therefore the question, resulting from the over-eagerness of the Faithful, that, like fasting, there may be prescribed other acts of worship relating to other months also, was like approaching a house not through its door but by "the back thereof." The primary thing was worship and time was only secondary, but those who put the question wanted to make time primary and worship merely secondary. This was like putting the cart before the horse.

The clause also means that one should adopt the right course to attain an object. Every end can be attained by having recourse to certain means. Similarly, certain ways have been prescribed by God for winning His pleasure and attaining His nearness. People should faithfully stick to these and not devise ways of their own. By doing so, they will only suffer trouble, and gain nothing.

It is also on record that it was the practice among the idolaters of Arabia that when they left their homes and started on Pilgrimage to Mecca, then if for some purpose or object they had to come back to their houses, they did not enter them by their doors, but climbed into them by their back walls (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*). Islam does not approve of such meaningless practices.

191. And "fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.¹⁹⁷

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١٩١﴾

192. And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for 'persecution is worse than killing. And fight them not *in, and* near, the Sacred Mosque until they fight you therein. But if they fight you, then fight them: such is the requital for the disbelievers.¹⁹⁸

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ فَإِنْ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾

a4 : 76 ; 8 : 40 ; 9 : 13 ; 22 : 40 ; 60 : 9, 10. b2 : 218.

197. Important Words :

سبيل الله (the cause of Allah) literally means, "the way of Allah." Anything done to remove the obstacles hindering people from approaching God or accepting His religion is termed في سبيل الله i.e. in the cause of Allah; also anything done to further the cause of Allah or any act performed in compliance with God's commandment. Thus holy wars, missionary campaigns, Pilgrimage, search of knowledge, etc., in fact anything done to further the cause of goodness and virtue as commanded by God is في سبيل الله.

Commentary :

The subject relating to the attainment of virtue and piety and the incidental mention of Pilgrimage naturally diverts one's attention to the obstacles that were being placed in the way of Muslims by disbelievers who were making them victims of all sorts of wrongs and even prevented them from approaching their Qibla in Mecca. The Quran, therefore, fittingly turns here to the subject of religious wars.

The verse contains the gist of the conditions which should regulate a religious war and which were made binding on Muslims. The conditions mentioned in this verse are four in number :

(1) Such a war should truly be في سبيل الله i.e. undertaken with the object of removing obstacles

placed in the way of God and His religion. Any war that is not في سبيل الله is not a lawful, religious war.

(2) Such war is allowed only against those who first take up arms against Muslims as the words, الذين يقاتلونكم (*those who fight against you*), indicate.

(3) Great care should be taken that women, children and old men of the belligerent nation who do not take actual part in the war against Islam are spared, for religious war is allowed only against *those who fight against you*. If, however, an old man or a woman takes actual part in the fighting the responsibility lies on him or her and in such a case he or she loses the concession. Says the Holy Prophet : "Do not kill an old man or a child or a woman, and always try to improve things and reform matters and act kindly towards others, for Allah loves those who act kindly" (Dāwūd).

(4) Muslims should bring the war to an end as soon as the enemy desists from fighting, for in this case further fighting is not permissible, as the words لا تعتدوا i.e. do not transgress; surely Allah loves not the transgressors, clearly prove. What a just and noble teaching and how tersely and beautifully expressed !

198. Important Words :

ثقفتموهم (you met them) is derived from ثقف They say ثقفه i.e. (1) he faced him or he met

193. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.¹⁹⁹

فَإِنْ أَنْتَهُوَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٩﴾

a8 : 40,

him ; (2) he caught hold of him ; (3) he got the better of him (Aqrab).

فِتْنَة (persecution) is derived from فتن. They say فتن فلانا i.e. he led him astray ; he tried or tested him. The expression فتن فلانا عن رأيه means, he prevented him from holding his views. The words فتن الصانع الذهب mean, the goldsmith melted the gold in the crucible to ascertain its genuineness. فتنه means, he put him in a state of trial or persecution. Thus فِتْنَة means : (1) trial ; (2) torture and persecution ; (3) divergence of views among men and the disputes and fighting that take place as a result thereof (Aqrab). See also 2 : 103.

Commentary :

The verse relates to conditions when a war has actually broken out. Obviously it does not apply to all disbelievers, for it only says, "*kill them*" and not "*kill the disbelievers.*" The pronoun "them" clearly refers to, *those who fight against you*, as mentioned in the previous verse. The verse calls upon Muslims to fight against only such disbelievers as take up arms against them. It does not call upon them to slay each and every disbeliever that may happen to come in their way. Indeed this verse affords a remarkable instance of the way in which the plain words of the Quran are generally distorted by the opponents of Islam.

The clause, *and drive them out from where they have driven you out*, refers to the time when the enemies of Islam compelled the Holy Prophet and his Companions to flee from Mecca. It enjoins Muslims to bear in mind that they have eventually to conquer Mecca which being the centre and the most sacred place of Islam, no non-Muslim would be allowed to remain in it.

The clause, *persecution is worse than killing*, provides an argument in support of defensive war. The disbelievers were persecuting Muslims in diverse ways with a view to turning them away from their faith and they were also creating disorder in the land. It was certainly better to put a stop to this state of affairs by fighting against the aggressors than to allow it to continue. There are circumstances when, to every right-thinking man, war becomes necessary.

The words فِتْنَة (persecution) and قتل (killing) may be interpreted in another way also. فِتْنَة means, "persecution or war waged against a people with a view to turning them from their faith," and قتل means, "an ordinary secular war." Now the verse points out that a war of religious persecution is worse than an ordinary war; for, *firstly*, worldly interests are nothing as compared with matters of faith; and *secondly*, wars caused by religious differences are more bitter and cruel, and seldom come to an end.

The clause, *and fight them not in and near the Sacred Mosque until they fight you therein*, contains a very important principle. Even after the declaration of war there are restrictions to be observed, and Muslims should never be the first to break them. The sanctity of the holy precincts of the Ka'ba must be safeguarded even in time of war. If, however, the other party violates its sanctity, Muslims may retaliate so that the attacking party may thereby be brought to its senses.

199. Commentary :

The verse speaks of the great clemency of Islamic teaching. Even after the disbelievers have inflicted diverse torments on Muslims, turning them out of their homes and making

194. And ^afight them until there is no persecution, and religion is *professed* for Allah. But if they desist, then *remember* that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.²⁰⁰

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ
فَإِنْ أَنتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

^a8; 40. See 2 : 191.

their lives miserable and creating chaos and disorder in the land, they are to be forgiven and treated mercifully if they desist from fighting. Nay, God even promises them His forgiveness and mercy if they so desist.

200. Important Words :

الدين (religion) has a number of meanings including (1) religion ; (2) rule and government (Aqrah). See also 1 : 4.

عدوان (hostility) is derived from عدا. They say عدا meaning, he passed beyond it. The expression عدا عليه means, he acted wrongfully towards him or he exceeded the proper limit against him. The words عاداه mean, he treated him with enmity and hostility. Thus عدوان means : (1) hostility ; (2) wrongful conduct ; (3) punishment for wrongful conduct and ; (4) approach or way to a person by way of justification or excuse against him (Munjid, Mufradāt & Lane).

Commentary :

This verse is often quoted by the opponents of Islam in support of their allegation that the Quran inculcates the carrying-on of war against unbelievers until all traces of false religions are wiped out and the whole world embraces Islam. But such a view is clearly wrong. The word which throws light on the true significance of this verse is فِتْنَةٌ (persecution) which, as has been explained in the preceding verse, means religious persecution. This verse therefore enjoins Muslims to fight only till persecution for religion is over. It is on record that during the war between Hazrat 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah, 'Abdullah, son of 'Umar, was

once asked why he did not take part in the war when the Quran enjoined the Muslims to fight to put an end to فِتْنَةٌ. He replied : "We did indeed act upon this injunction of the Quran when in the time of the Holy Prophet the number of Muslims was small and a man was subjected to فِتْنَةٌ i.e., persecution for his religious beliefs, being either put to death outright or tortured, until at last Islam spread and the فِتْنَةٌ was over." (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*). These words of 'Abdullah, son of 'Umar, leave no doubt that the word فِتْنَةٌ in this verse means persecution for religious beliefs and nothing else. Muslims are enjoined to fight until there is no فِتْنَةٌ i.e. no persecution for religious beliefs.

The words that follow, i.e., *and religion is professed for Allah*, would, therefore, mean that Muslims should fight till profession of a faith is not influenced by the fear of men, but that whatever religion a man follows, he should follow it only for the sake of God, and not out of the fear of men. The above interpretation is also borne out by the fact that the Holy Prophet entered into a number of treaties of peace with disbelievers, which could have no justification if the divine commandment had been to continue fighting until all embraced Islam. The object of the *Jihad* or holy war which the Holy Prophet was bidden to undertake is clearly stated in 22 : 40—42, which were the first verses that gave Muslims the permission to take up arms against disbelievers and the idea has been further clarified in 2 : 191, 193 above. Among the numerous other verses

195. "The violation of a Sacred Month should be retaliated in the Sacred Month; and for all sacred things there is the law of retaliation. So, whoso transgresses against you, punish him for his transgression to the extent to which he has transgressed against you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him."²⁰¹

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَتُ قِصَاصٌ
مَنْ أَعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا أَعْتَدَ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ⁽¹⁹⁵⁾

^aSee 2 : 179.

which throw light on this subject the reader is referred to 2 : 195, 218, 257 ; 3 : 135 ; 4 : 91, 92 ; 5 : 3, 9, 33 ; 8 : 39, 62, 63 ; 9 : 6, 8, 10, 13 ; 22 : 39, 41 ; 41 : 35 ; 42 : 49 ; 50 : 46 ; 60 : 9, 10.

The concluding clause *i.e. but if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors*, further confirms the interpretation of the verse as given above. If the Quran enjoined the waging of war till Islam obtained universal acceptance, then there would be no sense whatever in the injunction that if disbelievers desisted from fighting and no longer remained aggressors, Muslims should also stop hostilities ; for, as the verse puts it, fighting is not permissible "except against the aggressors."

201. Important Words :

الشهر الحرام (Sacred Month). From the earliest pre-Islamic times four out of the twelve lunar months have been regarded as sacred (9 : 36) in which fighting, etc., was held to be unlawful and people travelled in perfect peace and security. They were (1) *Dhū'l-Qa'da*, (2) *Dhū'l-Hijja*, (3) *Al-Muhurram*, and (4) *Rajab*, the first named three months occurring consecutively and the last separately. As حج (Pilgrimage) was performed in *Dhū'l-Hijja*, the three consecutive months served as a safe period for travelling for the purposes of Pilgrimage, both for the inward and the outward journey. The month of *Rajab* was generally

meant for *عمرة* (the Lesser Pilgrimage). The system was pre-Islamic not in the sense that it had its origin in pagan Arabia but in the sense that it came in vogue along with the institution of Pilgrimage established by Abraham under the commandment of God (22 : 27, 28). As Islam retained the institution of حج it naturally upheld the sanctity of the Sacred Months as well. Even warring tribes desisted from fighting at the approach of a Sacred Month when all bloodshed vanished from the land (Bukhārī, Qaṣṭalānī, Zurqānī & Tāj).

The words *فاعتدوا عليه* (punish him for his transgression) literally mean, "transgress against him," but as one who retaliates against the transgression of a party does not really transgress but simply punishes the transgression of the aggressor, the words have been rightly translated as *punish him for his transgression*. This is quite in accordance with the Arabic idiom ; for, as shown under 2 : 16, the Arabs generally repeat the very word used for expressing the wrongdoing of a party to signify the punishment thereof.

Commentary :

The verse embodies an important principle. If, in fighting, the sanctity of a Sacred Month is violated by some tribe hostile to Islam, Muslims are not to sit hand-bound and allow the aggressors to victimize them. They should retaliate ; for in such retaliation lies the very

196. And ²⁰²spend for the cause of Allah, and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands, and do good; surely, Allah loves those who do good.²⁰²

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ
وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْبُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

^a2 : 255 ; 14 : 32 ; 47 : 39 ; 57 : 11 ; 63 : 11.

safeguarding of the sanctity of a sacred thing ; otherwise, the enemy would be unduly encouraged and would be all the more emboldened to commit such sacrileges.

But as fighting in a Sacred Month is a dangerous thing (2 : 218) and as the punishment of an act of transgression is also likely to exceed proper limits and a slight error of judgement on the part of Muslims might make them sinful in the sight of God, the latter part of the verse suitably warns them to fear God and always remain within proper bounds ; for, *Allah is with those who fear Him.*

202. Commentary :

As the successful prosecution of war required money, the Faithful are here exhorted to spend in the cause of Allah so that the war which they have been bidden to wage in the defence of their faith may be conducted with efficiency.

The clause, *and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands*, does not mean, as supposed by some ignorant people, that Muslims should spare themselves and do nothing that may endanger their lives. On the contrary, it means that if Muslims will not spend money freely to carry on the war properly, they will

be casting themselves into ruin with their own hands ; for in that case the enemy will continue to persecute them and will one day wipe them out of existence. This interpretation is borne out by the sayings of some of the Companions themselves (Dāwūd, Tirmidhī & Jarīr).

The clause, *and do good, surely Allah loves those who do good*, may have four meanings : (1) Either it means, do not spend money yourselves only but give it to your poorer brethren also so that they too may be able to take part in the war. (2) Or it means, do not be unjust or cruel to your enemies in your eagerness to bring the war to a speedy end, for Allah loves those who are good to others. Elsewhere the Quran says : *Let not the enmity of a people incite you to be unjust. Be just (to all) for that is nearer righteousness.* (3) Or it means, think well of your Lord i.e. do not think that if you spend your money under God's commandment, He will suffer you to come to ruin thereby. Or (4) it means, perform your duties well and fulfil your obligations faithfully and efficiently. The latter two meanings are supported by the sayings of the Companions of the Holy Prophet also (Jarīr).

197. And complete the Hajj and the 'Umra for the sake of Allah: but if you are kept back, then make whatever offering is easily available; and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination. And whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head, should make an expiation either by fasting or almsgiving or a sacrifice. But when you are safe, then he, who would avail himself of the 'Umra together with the Hajj, should make whatever offering is easily obtainable. But such of you as cannot find an offering should fast three days during the Pilgrimage, and seven when you return home; these are ten complete. This is for him whose family do not reside near the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in punishing.²⁰³

وَاتَّبِعُوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فِصْيَامَ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٩٧﴾

^a48 : 26.

203. Commentary :

From this verse begin commandments relating to حج or the Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage is performed in the following manner: The would-be pilgrim enters into a state of احرام (Ihrām) on reaching the مَقَات i.e. certain prescribed places slightly varying in distance in different directions, but in all cases outside حرم (the Sacred Territory). In the state of احرام the pilgrim is forbidden sexual intercourse, the use of scent or perfumed oil, the wearing of sewn garments, hunting and the like. The male pilgrim discards ordinary clothes, putting on white unsewn sheets and keeping the head uncovered. The female pilgrim may put on ordinary but simple clothes and should ordinarily keep her face uncovered. The pilgrim (male or female) is required to repeat the following words as often as possible: *Allā-*

humma labbaik, labbaik; lā sharīka laka labbaik; innal ḥamda wan-ni'matā wal mulka laka; lā sharīka laka labbaik i.e. "My Lord! I am at Thy service. There is no equal or partner with Thee. So I am at Thy service alone. All praise belongs to Thee and all blessings are from Thee and all authority rests in Thee. I say again, there is no equal or partner with Thee. So I am at Thy service alone."

At Mecca the first thing the pilgrim does, preferably after having a bath, is to perform seven circuits round the Ka'ba; then he briskly walks or runs between the *Ṣafā* and the *Marwa* (see 2 : 159) seven times. On the eighth day of *Dhū'l-Hijja* (the month of Pilgrimage) he goes in the morning from Mecca to *Minā*, which is about three miles from Mecca, where he halts to perform, at their appointed time, the five daily Prayers, beginning from the midday

Prayer. Next morning (*i.e.* the 9th) he starts from *Minā* and passing through, or by, *Mash'ar al-Harām*, which is about six miles from Mecca, he goes on to the great plain at '*Arafāt*, three miles further ahead, where, before he actually enters '*Arafāt*, he says the midday and the afternoon Prayers together; and when all the pilgrims have entered '*Arafāt*, the Imam delivers a sermon, while the pilgrims do nothing but silently pray and stand still. Thereafter the pilgrim returns after sunset to *Muzdalifah* or *Mash'ar al-Harām* where he says the evening and the night Prayers together and spends most of his time in prayer and meditation. Next day (*i.e.*, the 10th) after offering his morning Prayer at *Mash'ar al-Harām* he starts back early for *Minā*, where he casts pebbles (seven in number) at the three appointed pillars beginning with the *Jamrat al-Aqaba*, repeating this each day that he stays at *Minā*. The same day, *i.e.*, the 10th, the pilgrim offers his sacrifice (goat, sheep, ram, cow, camel, etc.), gets his head shaved, takes a bath and puts on his ordinary clothes. Thereafter he proceeds to Mecca and again performs the circuit of the Ka'ba seven times and then returns to *Minā* if he should so desire. The stay at *Minā* may last from part of a day to three or four days known as أيام معدودات (*i.e.* the numbered days) with which the *Hajj* is completed. All this time the pilgrim should repeat, as many times as possible, the above-mentioned prayer.

عمرة or the Lesser Pilgrimage consists in entering into a state of احرام (*Ihrām*) in the way described above, circuiting the Ka'ba seven times, running between the *Ṣafā* and the *Marwa* and offering a sacrifice which, however, is not obligatory. '*Umra* may be performed at any time of the year, whereas the *Hajj* or the Greater Pilgrimage is performed only during the month of *Dhū'l-Hijja*. For the literal meanings of the words *Hajj* and '*Umra* see note on 2 : 159.

The words, *If you are kept back*, refer to a state

of affairs when a would-be pilgrim is prevented by disease, or a state of war, or some other cause, from visiting the Ka'ba to perform the *Hajj* or the '*Umra*. In this case the pilgrim may refrain from proceeding further and should sacrifice *whatever offering is easily available i.e.* a goat, a sheep, a cow, or a camel, etc. But he should not shave his head *until the offering reaches its destination*, the idea being to remain in the state of *Ihrām* until the offering reaches *Minā* which is the place meant for it. If, however, the offering cannot be sent to Mecca, it may be sacrificed by the pilgrim at the place where he is detained and the meat either consumed by the pilgrim himself or distributed among friends, relatives, neighbours, etc. It will be noted that the offering of a sacrifice is obligatory only when a would-be pilgrim is prevented from completing his *Hajj* or '*Umra*. In ordinary circumstances when a person performs a *Hajj* or an '*Umra* separately, it is only supererogatory, becoming obligatory only when the *Hajj* and the '*Umra* are combined.

The clause, *should make an expiation either by fasting or almsgiving or a sacrifice*, relates to such people as cannot shave their heads owing to some ailment. The alternatives mentioned are meant to suit different grades of people. Fasting is meant for the poor; feeding the needy for the pilgrims of the middle class; and the offering of a sacrifice for the rich. The Quran does not fix the number of days for which one is to fast, or the number of the poor whom one is to feed or the kind of animal which one is to sacrifice. The Holy Prophet is reported to have once prescribed fasting for three days (*i.e.* three one-day fasts), and the feeding of six poor men and the offering of a goat as a sacrifice (Bukhārī).

The words, *when you are safe*, mean, when the war is over, or when other obstacles are removed. In such case it is open to a person to proceed to Mecca with the intention of

performing 'Umra and then stay on to perform Hajj in the ensuing month of Dhū'l-Hijja. This is what is referred to in the words: *who would avail himself of 'Umra together with the Hajj.*

'Umra and Hajj may be combined in two ways: One way is for the would-be pilgrim to make up his mind to perform the 'Umra only and enter into the state of *Ihrām* with that intention, and then perform its rites and finish it. After that on the eighth day of Dhū'l-Hijja one should again enter into the state of *Ihrām* and then perform the prescribed rites of Hajj. This form of combining the 'Umra and the Hajj is technically called *Tamattu'* which literally means, "availing oneself of a thing."

The second way is that a man should make up his mind to perform the 'Umra and Hajj simultaneously. He should, in this case, enter into the state of *Ihrām* with that intention and should remain in that state till the end of the Pilgrimage. This combination of Hajj and 'Umra is called *Qirān* (قِرَان) which literally means, "the putting together of two things." In both *Tamattu'* and *Qirān* it is obligatory to offer the sacrifice, while in the case of Hajj alone or in the case of 'Umra alone, the offering of the sacrifice is not obligatory. In the verse under comment the word *مع* is not used in the technical sense and covers *Qirān* also.

The fasting mentioned in the clause, *should fast three days during the Pilgrimage*, is distinct and separate from the fasting mentioned above. The first-mentioned fasting was meant for those who cannot shave their heads, while this fasting is meant for those who are unable to offer a sacrifice in case of *Tamattu'*. The three days spoken of are preferably the 11th, 12th and 13th of Dhū'l-Hijja. The remaining seven fasts may be observed after one has returned home.

The clause, *this is for him whose family does not reside near the Sacred Mosque*, means that the permission to combine Hajj with 'Umra is meant not for the residents of Mecca but for those who come from outside. By some, however, the words "the Sacred Mosque" have been extended to include the whole of حَرَم i.e. the Sacred Territory in and around Mecca.

The final clause, *fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in punishing*, has a twofold meaning: (1) That Muslims should not think that these are mere minor details of certain outward rites and may therefore not be strictly observed; for all these things which the All-Knowing God has prescribed for the Faithful are necessary in His sight and are meant for their own good. So, whoever neglects these details not only incurs the displeasure of God but also hinders his own spiritual progress. (2) That the performance of Hajj should not fill the heart with pride (which unfortunately is very often the case nowadays), for this would defeat the very object of Pilgrimage which is the attainment of *تقوى* or God-fearingness. In such case the so-called pilgrim will not find himself nearer God but rather would see His punishment descending on him.

In connection with this verse, it should also be noted that besides giving a general meaning as stated above, it also refers to a specific incident in Islamic history i.e. the Truce of Hudaibiya. The verse was revealed before that truce and hinted that a time was coming when Muslims would start towards Mecca with the intention of performing Pilgrimage, but they would be "kept back" from doing so by disbelievers. Later, however, God would grant them victory over the disbelievers and they would be "safe" to perform the Pilgrimage in peace. What a true picture of the apparent set-back at Hudaibiya and the subsequent fall of Mecca at the hands of the Holy Prophet!

٢. 25 198. "The months of the Hajj are well known; so ^bwhoever determines to perform the Pilgrimage in these months, *should remember that there is to be no foul talk, nor any transgression, nor any quarrelling during the Pilgrimage. And whatever good you do, Allah knows it. And furnish yourselves with necessary provisions, and surely the best provision is righteousness. And fear Me alone, O men of understanding.*"²⁰⁴

الْحَجَّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَةٌ ۖ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ
فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ۚ وَمَا
تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمْهُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ
الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٩٨﴾

^a2 : 190 ; 9 : 36.

^b3 : 98 ; 22 : 28.

204. Important Words :

رفث (foul talk) means, foul, immodest or lewd talk or speech in relation to women. It also signifies acts leading to and including coition (Mufradât & Lane). See also 2:188.

فسوق (transgression) is the same as فسق for which see note on 2 : 27.

جدال (quarrelling) is derived from جدل. They say جدل الرجل *i.e.* he twisted the rope. جدل الرجل means, his dispute or quarrel became intensified. جادله means, he disputed or quarrelled with him. Thus جدال means, dispute or quarrel, or the use of strong and hot words (Aqrab).

تزودا (furnish yourselves) and الزاد (provision) are both derived from زاد with زاء as the central root letter. They say زاد الرجل *i.e.* the man prepared a provision for himself for a journey, etc. تزود means, he took for himself a provision. تزود من الأمير كتابا الى عامله means, he took from the caliph a letter of introduction to his governor so that the latter might afford him his assistance as and when required. الزاد means, any provision, etc. taken when proceeding on a journey (Aqrab). The word is used of extra store meant for future use (Mufradât).

Commentary :

The clause, *the months of the Hajj are well known*, is intended to hint that in the matter of

the time of Pilgrimage the Quran gives no new commandment. The established custom is the right one, being rightly retained by the Arabs from the days of Abraham and Ishmael. The three lunar months during which one may formally undertake the Pilgrimage and enter into the state of *Ihrām* are *Shawwāl*, *Dhū'l-Qa'dah* and the first ten days of *Dhū'l-Hijja* (Bukhārī).

The clause, *there is to be no foul talk, nor any transgression nor any quarrelling during the Pilgrimage*, does not mean that such acts are permissible at other times but that these are necessary conditions for the completion of Pilgrimage, which would be like a soulless body if one indulged in such things while undertaking it. Another purpose underlying these injunctions is that a person should abstain from them particularly during the period of Pilgrimage so that it might become easy for him to shun these things at other times as well. The three vices selected are typical of what should be scrupulously avoided in a religious gathering like that at the Pilgrimage. رفث (*rafath*) stands for all foul, immodest and lewd talk as well as acts relating to sex. فسوق (*fusūq*) stands for transgression against the laws of God and disobedience of lawful authority, whether spiritual or temporal. And جدال (*jidāl*) stands for disputes and quarrels with co-travellers, companions and neighbours

199. It is no sin for you that you seek the bounty of your Lord. But when you pour forth from 'Arafāt, remember Allah at Mash'ar al-Harām; and remember Him as He has guided you; although, before this, you were of those gone astray.²⁰⁵

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ
فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الشَّعْرِ
الْحَرَامِ وَأَذْكُرُوا كَمَا هَدَيْتُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِ لَسَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾

^a62 : 11. ^b2 : 153, 204 ; 8 : 46 ; 62 : 11.

The clause, *And furnish yourselves with necessary provisions*, does not only refer to the preparation which one makes for an ordinary journey which is necessary in its own way, but also to the preparation which one has to make for a spiritual journey. In this sense the clause would signify "provide yourselves with piety and righteousness;" and in order to emphasize the latter kind of provision, the Quran fittingly adds, *and surely the best provision is righteousness*. But ordinary provision is also necessary; for, if a man does not take necessary provisions with him, he will be certainly put to great inconvenience and hardship on the way and will have to beg of others for help and both these things are detrimental to the noble object underlying Pilgrimage.

205. Important Words :

فضل (bounty). See 2 : 65.

افضتم (you pour forth) is derived from افاض which is again derived from فاض. They say فاض السيل i.e. the flood-water was great in quantity and overflowed the banks. فاضت عينه means, his eye was full of tears, which began to flow down fast. افاض is both transitive and intransitive. They say افاض الماء i.e. he poured out water. They say افاض القوم من المكان means, the people, who were great in number, poured forth from the house and dispersed. فاض is one whose charity flows like water (Aqrab).

عرفات ('Arafāt) is the name given to a plain or valley near Mecca where pilgrims halt in the latter portion of the ninth day of Dhū'l-Hijja. It is about a mile and a half in circuit with sloping sides rising nearly two hundred feet above the level of the adjacent plain. It is nine miles from Mecca, and the halt technically known as وقوف at this place forms the principal factor of Hajj or Pilgrimage. The word is derived from عرف meaning, he knew or recognized.

مشعر الحرام (Mash'ar al-Harām) is the name given to a small hillock in Muzdalifah, which lies between Mecca and 'Arafāt. Here the Holy Prophet said the evening and the night Prayers and offered special prayers to God before the rising of the sun. It is thus a place specially meant for meditation and prayer in Pilgrimage. It is about six miles from Mecca. The name is a compound of مشعر (from شعر) meaning, the place or means of perception or knowledge, and الحرام (from حرم) meaning, sacred.

Commentary :

As the object of Pilgrimage is that the greatest possible number of Muslims should take part in it, therefore, the Quran permits pilgrims to engage in commerce and trade. Those who cannot take hard cash with them may carry merchandise, and thereby earn money to meet the expenses of the journey. This is what is hinted in the clause, *it is no sin for you that you seek the bounty of your Lord*. Similar permission

200. Then pour forth from where the people pour forth, and seek forgiveness from Allah; surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.²⁰⁶

ثُمَّ أَيْضًا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَكَأَصَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفَرُوا
اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

is granted to those who gather for the Friday Prayers (62 : 11).

But trade should not interfere with the acts of worship and devotion prescribed in Pilgrimage. Says God, *but when you pour forth from 'Arafāt, remember Him as He has guided you.* The Holy Prophet used to pass his time in prayer and meditation at *Mash'ar al-Harām* and the Faithful are warned that trade or any other worldly occupation should not make them forget the real object of Pilgrimage. The word *انفتم* (pour forth, lit. overflow) also has a metaphorical meaning i.e. when you return from 'Arafāt, you should not return empty-handed but should return like a vessel full to overflowing with spiritual knowledge and blessings.

The reader will note that *عرفات* ('Arafāt) and *مشعرالحرام* (*Mash'ar al-Harām*) are both attributive names which have not come to be used as proper ones. They are used to draw the attention of the pilgrim to the fact that *Hajj* should be a source of knowledge and spiritual realization to him and not a mere outward rite, a mere shell, with no inner soul. The word 'Arafāt also hints that it should be a means of mutual introduction and recognition for Muslims coming from different parts of the world.

206. Important Words :

غفر (ask forgiveness) is derived from *استغفر* (ask forgiveness) for which see 2 : 59. *استغفر* would thus mean, he asked God for *مغفرة* in all its senses i.e. covering up of sins, forgiveness, protection against stumbling, protection against punishment of sins, etc. *استغفار* is not confined to verbal asking for forgiveness only, but extends to, and includes, practical change for the better on the part of him who asks for forgiveness. He

should ask for pardon both by word and deed (*Mufradāt*).

Commentary :

The word *ثم* (then) in the clause, *then pour forth from where the people pour forth*, has given rise to a divergence of opinion among Commentators. If it means, "then," it must needs be taken to indicate sequence or order and the clause would thus signify : "after you have returned to مشعرالحرام عرفات (as mentioned in the preceding verse), you should return (from مشعرالحرام to منى) from where the people return." But this is obviously superfluous, as nobody has ever differed about proceeding to and returning from مشعرالحرام with the people. A difference existed only with regard to proceeding to and returning from عرفات ; for, whereas the Quraish and the Kināna, known as Hums, stopped short at *Mash'ar al-Harām*, a place within حرم (the Sacred Territory) and did not go up to 'Arafāt which is outside حرم, other pilgrims went right up to 'Arafāt. Consequently if the commandment with regard to "pouring forth with the people" was at all needed, it was needed with regard to 'Arafāt and not with regard to *Mash'ar al-Harām* ; but in the verse under comment the Quran appears to mention it in connection with the latter. This difficulty has led some to interpret the word *ثم* not as "then" but simply as "and" which the idiom of the Arabic language justifies (Lane). These Commentators have translated the words *ثم أَيْضًا* not as "then pour forth" but simply as "and pour forth." In this case the "pouring forth" spoken of may relate to 'Arafāt and not to *Mash'ar al-Harām* as the clause under comment appears to indicate. This is certainly not an incorrect interpretation

so far as the rules of the Arabic language go ; but another interpretation is also possible in which the primary meaning of *ثم* (then) is retained. This may be explained as follows. The preceding verse speaks of "pouring forth" or returning from 'Arafāt, thereby making it plain that going up to 'Arafāt is necessary. This completes the commandment with regard to the stay at and return from 'Arafāt. The verse under comment takes us further, speaking of the return from *Mash'ar al-Harām* and not from 'Arafāt, and thus the primary significance of *ثم* i.e. "then" is retained, for the obvious reason that the return from *Mash'ar al-Harām* comes after the return from 'Arafāt. As to the words, *pour forth from where the people pour forth*, it may be noted that in this case they would be taken to have been used merely to indicate that whereas the return from 'Arafāt is confined to those who adhere to the right custom and go right up to 'Arafāt, the return from *Mash'ar al-Harām* is general, including also the proud Hums who stopped short at *Mash'ar al-Harām* and did not go further. This is further corroborated by the fact that whereas the Quran uses the word *افضتم* (you pour forth) with regard to the return from 'Arafāt, it uses the words *افضوا من حيث افاض الناس* i.e. "pour forth from where the people (i.e., all people) pour forth" with regard to the return from *Mash'ar al-Harām* which was at that time more general and extended to all. Thus the meaning of the word *الناس* would also change with the change in the meaning of the word *ثم*. If *ثم* is taken to mean "and," and "the return" spoken of in this verse is taken to refer to the return from 'Arafāt, then *الناس* would mean "other people"; but if *ثم* is taken to mean "then" and "the return" spoken of here is taken to refer to the return from *Mash'ar al-Harām*, then *الناس* would signify "all people" and both these meanings are justified by the rules of the Arabic language.

In short, before the advent of Islam the

Quraish and the Banū Kināna known as Hums did not accompany other pilgrims to 'Arafāt, but stopped short at *Mash'ar al-Harām*, waiting to join other people returning from 'Arafāt. In this and the preceding verse, they are bidden not to stop short at *Mash'ar al-Harām* but to go up to 'Arafāt and do as other people do. After returning from 'Arafāt to *Mash'ar al-Harām*, pilgrims should proceed to *Minā* where sacrifices are offered and the state of *Ihrām* comes to an end. The clause, *and seek forgiveness from Allah*, hints that as *Hajj* consists of certain rites, there is the possibility of some persons not understanding the meaning and spirit of these rites. Moreover, where a number of religious acts are crowded into a short space of time, there is always the possibility of some persons missing and omitting certain things or of forgetting the prescribed order thereof. The pilgrims are, therefore, exhorted to have recourse to *Istighfār*, i.e., seeking God's forgiveness as well as His protection against error and its consequences.

The word *استغفار* literally means "to pray for the covering up of sins and protection," which signifies forgiveness for past sins and protection against future ones. Thus, when a pilgrim offers *Istighfār*, he seeks not only forgiveness for what is past or protection against stumbling with regard to the observance of the rites of Pilgrimage but also protection against future stumblings.

It should also be remembered that *Istighfār* is not needed by ordinary people only, but holy servants of God also resort to it. The former offer *Istighfār* to seek protection against future sins as well as from the consequences of past errors; while the latter seek protection against human shortcomings and limitations that may hinder their progress and work. Holy men, too, are human, and though they may be free from sins, they are always eager to seek divine help and assistance against human

201. And when you have performed ^athe acts of worship prescribed for you, ^bcelebrate the praises of Allah as you celebrated the praises of your fathers, or even more than that. And ^cof men there are some who say, 'Our Lord, grant us *good things* in this world;' and such a one shall have no share in the Hereafter.²⁰⁷

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتْمْ مَنَاسِكُكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ
آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ زِكْرًا فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ
رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَقٍ ۝٢٠١

^a2 : 129. ^bSee 2 : 153. ^c4 : 135 ; 42 : 21.

weaknesses and frailties. Nay, as they have to set an example to others and their responsibilities are also far heavier than those of other people, they resort to *Istighfār* more often than ordinary men.

207. Important Words :

فَإِذَا (celebrate praises of) is derived from ذَكَرَ which means, (1) he talked of him by way of praising him ; (2) he remembered him in his heart (Aqrab & Mufradāt). See also 2 : 41, 153.

أَوْ (or) is a preposition used to convey a number of meanings, the more important being : (1) or ; (2) and ; (3) nay ; (4) unless ; (5) until (Aqrab & Lane).

خَلَقٍ (share) means, an abundant share in what is good (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The clause, *celebrate the praises of Allah as you celebrated the praises of your fathers*, points to a practice of pagan Arabs who used to gather together at a certain place in *Minā* after the performance of the rites of Pilgrimage and glorify their forefathers by reciting poems in their praise. Muslims are here bidden to glorify God instead, and praise Him as they used to praise their forefathers, and the words "even more than that" have been added to emphasize that God's praises should transcend all, for the word

أَوْ (or) also means, "nay." It is also possible that the word كَ (as) in the expression كَذِكْرِكُمْ (as you celebrated praises) has been used only to denote general similarity without reference to degree, and the word أَوْ (or) has been used in the sense of "and." In this case the verse would mean that though in the general manner of praise your celebration of God's praises may resemble the praises with which you glorified your fathers, in degree it should excel it, being أَشَدَّ (stronger, loftier and firmer).

Here is a good example of how the Quran, while retaining some old customs, improved upon and spiritualised them to serve the ends of Islam.

The clause, *when you have performed the acts of worship prescribed for you, celebrate the praises of Allah as you celebrated the praises of your fathers or even more than that*, has yet another meaning. As the word ذَكَرَ also means 'remembering' and the word أَب (father) includes mother as well (12 : 101), the clause may also signify that the rites of Pilgrimage, if performed in the right spirit, should fill the heart of man with such love for God as to make him always remember Him just as a child remembers his parents. This is why the Quran begins the word اذْكُرُوا with the conjunction فَ meaning "so" or "then," hinting that the result of the performance of the rites of Pilgrimage should be that a pilgrim should

202. And "of them there are some who say : ' Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire.'²⁰⁸

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

^a42 : 21.

ever after remember his Creator with the fondness displayed by a child for his parents. But this is only the first stage. With holier men God's love should be even greater, as the verse hints in the words, *or even more than that*. Says the Holy Prophet, "The sign of true faith is that a believer's love for God and His Apostle should be greater than his love for any other being or thing" (Bukhārī).

The concluding clause, *i.e., of men there are some who say, 'Our Lord, grant us (good things) in this world,' and such a one shall have no share in the Hereafter*, points to the fact that if the pilgrim confines himself to the celebration of the praises of his fathers and forgets his Creator, he would be like a person who spends all his efforts in the pursuit of this world, even his prayers being confined to search after worldly things. Such a person shall evidently have no claim to the good things of the Hereafter. It is also significant that in this clause the Quran does not use the word *حَسَنَةً* (good things) with the words *فِي الدُّنْيَا* (in this world) thereby hinting that such men generally make no distinction between the good things of this world and the bad things thereof, their sole object being the things of this world, irrespective of whether they are good or bad.

As explained under Important Words, the word *خَلاق* (share) occurring in the clause, *such a one shall have no share in the Hereafter*, really means, "an abundant share in what is good." So the verse would really mean not that such a person will get only a small share in the Hereafter but that, by remaining engrossed in the things of this world, he will deprive himself

a big share and will get no share at all. As the Quran has to condense vast subjects in a small space, it purposely uses words and constructions that take the smallest space but convey the vastest meaning.

208. Commentary :

In this verse God mentions that class of men whose efforts and wishes are not confined to this world only. They (1) seek the good things of this world, and (2) seek the good things of the next world, and (3) try to be saved from the Fire which not only signifies the fire of Hell but also everything that is painful and is a source of heart-burning. It may be noted that here, unlike the preceding verse, God uses the word *حَسَنَةً* (good) with the words *فِي الدُّنْيَا* (in this world), meaning that even virtuous men may seek the things of this world but they should always be good and not bad.

The prayer mentioned in this verse is indeed very comprehensive and may be used by men of all grades in all their spiritual and temporal requirements, and the Holy Prophet is reported to have used this prayer very often (Muslim, ch. on *Dhikr*) with a view to teaching his Companions that if and when they choose to seek both the good things of this world and of the next, they should pray like this.

The prayer has another significance also. The good things of this world and the good things of the Hereafter spoken of in this verse may both stand for spiritual blessings, the good things of this world standing for such spiritual blessings as a righteous man gets in this world

203. For these there shall be a *goodly* share because of what they have earned. And Allah is swift at reckoning.²⁰⁹

204. And ^aremember Allah during the appointed number of days ; but whoso hastens *to leave* in two days, it shall be no sin for him ; and whoso stays behind, it shall be no sin for him. *This is* for him who fears God. And fear Allah and know that you shall *all* be brought together before Him.²¹⁰

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٠٣﴾

وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ لِمَنِ الْتَقَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

^aSee 2 : 153.

and the good things of the next world standing for those which he will get Hereafter. In fact, the very words used in the verse point to that signification, for the Quranic words *في الدنيا حسنة* do not mean “good things of this world” but simply “good in this world.” In this case *النار* or “the Fire” would stand not for Hell, protection against which is, in fact, included in the good things of the next world, but for such trials and hardships as one may come across in this world in the struggle for spiritual advancement or in the effort to benefit others. It was in this sense that the Holy Prophet used this prayer with regard to himself ; for personally he never sought even the good things of this world, though he always sought “good in this world.”

209. Important Words :

نصيب (share) is derived from *نصب*. They say *نصبه* i.e. he set it up. Therefore *نصيب* means, a set share or portion (Lane).

Commentary :

Such men as seek the good things of this world as well as the good things of the Hereafter (2 : 202) will have their reward from God according to their deserts. The clause, *Allah is swift at reckoning*, however, contains a warning to such men, hinting that as some of their efforts are being spent in pursuit of the things of this

world, they should be careful lest any stumbling or weakness on their part should bring on them God's displeasure. The clause also points to the important fact that God has so ordained that in nature every action is immediately followed by its consequences, inasmuch as it leaves an impression on man, and thus all actions are preserved. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that when a man commits an evil deed, a black spot is formed in his heart and if he repeats the sin, the spot grows bigger and so on (Musnad). This, indeed, is the result which quickly follows the actions of man. In fact it is a reckoning which accompanies all actions of man.

210. Commentary :

The glorification of God or the celebration of His praises enjoined in the preceding verses is to be particularly observed in the appointed number of days to be spent in *Minā* after the *Hajj* is over. These are the 11th, the 12th and the 13th day of *Dhū'l-Hijja* during which the pilgrims are required, so far as possible, to stay at *Minā* and pass their time in God's glorification. In these days they are also required, as a symbol of the driving out of Satan, to cast pebbles daily at the three pillars so long as they stay there. These are called *أيام التشریق* i.e. the days of beauty and brightness.

The clause, *whoso hastens to leave in two days*, refers to the stay in *Minā*. If a pilgrim leaves *Minā* two days earlier or stays behind for two days more, no sin shall attach to him, provided everything he does is done with good intention, acting righteously and God-fearingly.

The verse ends with the clause, *and fear Allah and know that you shall be brought together before Him*, to bring home to the reader or the pilgrim that the underlying object of the Pilgrimage is *قوى*, the very word with which the Quran began its commandments about *Hajj* in 2 : 197, thus emphasizing that mere outward observance of certain rites is nothing unless they are accompanied by *قوى* or the spirit of righteousness which must underlie all actions of man.

The clause, *واعلموا انكم اليه تحشرون*, translated above as, *know that you shall all be brought together before Him*, is also intended to hint that the gathering in *Hajj* is not meant for the performance of certain rites and ceremonies but, as it were, for meeting God. In this case, the clause would be rendered as, "know that (in *Hajj*) you are brought together (i.e. the purpose of your gathering is) to meet God" and you must, therefore, behave accordingly. The gathering in *Hajj* is truly like the *حشر* (gathering) on the great Day of Judgement.

Now that the description of *Hajj* as given in these verses has come to an end, it would be appropriate to give here a brief but collective note on the wisdom and the significance of this act of worship and devotion. The Pilgrimage is indeed a great spiritual ordinance. According to the Quran, the Ka'ba is the first house of worship that was built for mankind (3 : 97). It dates not from Abraham, who simply rebuilt it, but from Adam. The Quran speaks of it as "the Ancient House" (22 : 30, 34). A Jewish tradition also says that Abraham built "the altar which Adam had built, which had been destroyed by the waters

of the Deluge, which Noah had again builded, and which had been destroyed in the age of divisions" (The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel translated by J. W. Ethelbridge, London, 1862, p. 226). The Ka'ba is the only altar that answers this description ; there is no other place so ancient. It was the purpose of God that men from all quarters should assemble at this central house and thus be reminded of their common humanity and common relation with the Lord of the worlds. Differences which divided one nation from another were to be forgotten and all drawn closer to one another in one common bond. The *Hajj* provides pilgrims of different lands and diverse nationalities with an excellent opportunity to cultivate acquaintance with one another and discuss matters of common interest. This purpose has been made all the more accessible by ordering pilgrims to pass the days of *Hajj*, and the days following, not within the four walls of Mecca but out in the open desert at *Minā*, *Muzdalifah* and '*Arafāt* and back again in *Minā*.

The different objects and places which play an important part in Pilgrimage are spoken of in the Quran as *شعائر الله* (2 : 159 ; 5 : 3 ; 22 : 33) or the Signs of God, which shows that they are meant by God to serve as symbols to impress upon the minds of pilgrims their inward significance.

The Ka'ba or the *Bait Allah* (the House of God), the very first house of worship round which thousands of devout pilgrims perform the circuit and towards which they all turn while offering their Prayers wherever they be, recalls to their mind the Unity and Majesty of God upon Whom depends all creation. It also reminds one of the unity of mankind.

The act of running between the *Ṣafā* and the *Marwa* calls to the minds of pilgrims the pathetic story of Hagar and Ishmael, reminding them how God provides for his helpless servants even in the solitude of a great wilderness.

Minā is a name derived from the word *umniyya* which means "an object" or "a desire." This reminds the pilgrim of the fact that he goes there with the "object" or the "desire" of meeting God. From *Minā* the pilgrim proceeds to *Muzdalifah* which means "nearness" and reminds him that the object with which he had set out has drawn "near." The other name of *Muzdalifah* is *Mash'ar al-Harām*, meaning the sacred symbol. This also hints that the final stage is near. From *Muzdalifah*, the pilgrim proceeds to 'Arafāt, the root-meaning of which is "to recognize." This reminds him that he has now reached the stage of "recognition" where he has "recognized" or known the One Lord and has met Him.

Again, the place chosen for this great concourse of the Faithful is a barren waste, devoid of all vegetation, as the Quran itself states (14:38). The only things that are met with there are sand, pebbles, rocks and rugged hillocks. Such a place has been chosen to bring home to us the fact that it possesses absolutely no attraction for which one might visit it. If there is anything for which one should go there, it is God and God alone. This is why in the present verse the Quran says, "know that you are being gathered here (not for any worldly object but) to meet Him."

Ihrām reminds one of the Day of Resurrection. Like the shroud of a dead body, the pilgrim is covered only with two unsewn sheets, one for the upper part of the body and the other for the lower; and he also has to remain bareheaded. This condition is to remind him that he has here, as it were, risen from the dead. The pilgrims gathered together at 'Arafāt truly present the spectacle of the Day of Resurrection—men suddenly risen from the dead in their white shrouds and assembled in the presence of their Lord.

The casting of pebbles at the three pillars at *Minā*—known as *Dunyā*, *Wustā* and 'Aqaba. is also an interesting representation. It reminds

the pilgrim of the three stages through which man has to pass and which have been referred to in the Quran as the three stages of human life, viz., (1) the present world, or *Dunyā* as it is called, which is symbolized by the first pillar, significantly called *Jamrat al-Dunyā* i.e. the pillar situated near; (2) the grave or the middle stage lying between this world and the next, the pillar corresponding to which is called *Jamrat al-Wustā* i.e. the middle pillar; and (3) the next world (known also as عقی *'Uqbā*) which is symbolized by the third pillar, which is accordingly called *Jamrat al-Aqaba* i.e. the pillar of the distant hillock that comes after the others. The casting of pebbles at these pillars is also symbolic of *Satan* being pelted. Evil thoughts should be driven out of one's mind just as God has driven away *Satan* from His presence.

The animals sacrificed are reminders of the great sacrifice of his son Ishmael offered by Abraham, and teach, in symbolic language, that man should ever be willing not only to sacrifice himself but also his wealth and property and even children in the way of God out of love for Him.

Pilgrims perform seven circuits round the Ka'ba, run seven times between the *Ṣafā* and the *Marwa* and cast seven pebbles at the pillars at *Minā*. The number *seven* being regarded by the Arabs as a symbol of perfection (Aqrah), the pilgrim is thereby reminded that in Pilgrimage, as in all other things, he should not be satisfied with half measures. He should always aim at perfection and get it. It is significant that the stages of spiritual progress which lead man to perfection and which have been detailed in 23:2—12 are also seven.

In short, the various rites of the *Hajj* and the objects that play a part therein are all emblematic and are replete with great and momentous lessons, but only for those who care to meditate.

205. And of men there is he whose talk on this life would please thee, and he would call Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart, and yet he is the most contentious of quarrellers.²¹¹

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْجِبُ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَيُشْهِدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

206. And when he is in authority, he runs about in the land to create disorder in it and destroy the crops and the progeny of man; and Allah loves not disorder.²¹²

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ
الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾

63 : 5.

211. Important Words :

يَعْجِبُ (would please thee) is derived from عَجِب meaning, he wondered; he became pleased. عَجِبَ means, it pleased him and caused him to wonder (Aqrab).

أَلَدُّ (most contentious) is derived from لَد meaning, he contended or quarrelled with him vehemently. So أَلَدُّ, which is the noun of pre-eminence from it, means, one who is a great quarreller. The plural of أَلَدُّ is لُدُّ ludd (Aqrab).

الْخِصَامِ (quarrellers) is the plural of خَصِم (quarreller). They say خَصِمَهُ i.e. he quarrelled or disputed with him. خَصِمَ and خَصِيم and مُحَاوَمَ all give the same meaning i.e. quarreller. The word الْخِصَامِ is also used in the infinitive sense, meaning the act of quarrelling (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

Two kinds of men have already been mentioned : (1) those who seek only the things of this world (2:201); and (2) those who seek both the good things of this world and those of the next (2:202). The present verse and those that follow mention two extreme types of these two classes. Of the former class, states the verse under comment, there are those who wax eloquent in their talk about this world, pleading for the necessity of improving the conditions

of life for mankind and calling God to witness their sincerity. Their eloquence and apparent love for fellow-beings would deceive the listener, but at heart they love only their own selfish interests and would vehemently dispute with others for their smallest rights, supposed or real, displaying none of that spirit of sacrifice which is essential for real human progress. They would look to their own interests or the interests of their family or those of their community or their nation only and would not make any sacrifice for, or even do justice to, others.

The clause, *he would call Allah to witness*, shows that such people outwardly profess faith in God but at heart are lacking in the quality of universal brotherhood which must result from a true belief in a Universal God—"Lord of all the worlds," as the Quran puts it.

212. Important Words :

تَوَلَّى (he is in authority) is derived from وَلَّى means : (1) he turned his back, he went away from one's presence ; (2) he held command, or he was in authority ; he became a رَئِيس or ruler (Aqrab & Tāj).

سَعَى (runs about) means : (1) he walked briskly or he ran ; (2) he made an effort ; or he strove to obtain an object (Aqrab).

207. And when it is said to him, 'Fear Allah,' pride incites him to further sin. So Hell shall be his sufficient reward; and surely, it is an evil place of rest.²¹³

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهُ
جَهَنَّمُ وَلَيْسَ الْبِهَادُ ٢٠٧

الحراث (the crops) is the noun-infinitive from حَرَثَ i.e. he ploughed or tilled the soil; he sowed seeds or planted plants in it; he acquired or earned or laboured for wealth or sustenance; he worked or laboured for the goods of the world. حَرَثَ means: (1) a tilth or a piece of land ploughed for sowing, or land actually sown with some crop; (2) land under crop; (3) crop or produce of land whether field crop or garden crop; (4) gain, acquisition or earning; (5) reward or recompense; (6) worldly goods; (7) wife or wives, because a wife is like a tilth in which seed is sown to bear crop in the form of children; (8) a much used road or a beaten track (Lane).

النسل (progeny). نسل الرجل means, he begot a child. نسل الرجل means, the man had many children; the progeny of the man increased. نسل means: (1) creatures; (2) children; (3) progeny, whether of man or beast (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

This verse further develops the idea contained in the preceding one. The type of man described in the previous verse (i.e. one whose talk about the affairs of this world is very pleasing but who is selfish at heart) becomes unmasked when he happens to be in authority, or when he goes away from the presence of the people and meets his associates in private. Thus both the meanings of the word تولى as mentioned under Important Words are appropriate here: (1) While he is in the presence of those who are sincere lovers of mankind, he says pleasing things; but when he goes away from them and meets his comrades in private, he strives to create disorder

on the earth. (2) Similarly, when he happens to come to power, he becomes exposed and all his talk about improving the affairs of the world vanishes like smoke, and instead of acting like a reformer he actually becomes a source of disorder.

The clause, *destroy the crops and the progeny*, means that all his efforts are directed towards harming people and their property. The words حَرَث and نسل have a number of meanings and all are applicable here. They refer to all kinds of damage relating to person and property.

The words, *Allah loves not disorder*, come as a fitting reply to the clause in the preceding verse, i.e., *he calls Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart*. Allah's evidence goes against him, for the man is after disorder, and Allah loves not disorder.

213. Important Words :

أَخَذَتْهُ (incites him) is from أَخَذَ meaning, he took, or he took hold; or he seized; or he punished, etc. (Aqrab). أَخَذَتْهُ بِكَذَا means, you incited him to do that and made him stick to it (Kashshāf). أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ may also mean, pride encompasses him with sin (Muḥit); or pride seizes him owing to his sin (Fath).

الْعِزَّةُ (pride) is derived from عَزَّ which means, he became mighty and honoured and noble. اِعْزَازُ الشَّيْءِ means, the thing became rare. اِعْزَازُ means, (1) might and power; (2) high position; (3) honour; (4) self-exaltation (Lane); (5) consciousness of one's position and rank; (6) pride in bad sense; (7) vanity (Aqrab).

جَهَنَّمَ (Hell). Lexicographers differ as to the origin of the word جَهَنَّمَ; but they generally agree that in Arabic it has no root except itself

208. And of men there is he who would sell himself to seek the pleasure of Allah ; and "Allah is Compassionate to His servants."²¹⁴

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠٨﴾

3 : 31 ; 9 : 117 ; 57 : 10.

and is used as a proper name for the place of punishment reserved for the evil-doers in the next world. It is, however, possible that the word has been derived from جهنم meaning, he became frowning or contracted, or ugly in face. جهنم means, the middle or the darkest part of the night. جهنم means, clouds that have no water (Lane). In this case the ن in جهنم would be something additional as in the word الندد derived from الدد meaning, a quarreller (Muhit). Thus جهنم would mean, a place of punishment which is dark and waterless and makes the faces of its inmates ugly and contracted.

Commentary :

The description of the kind of man mentioned in 2 : 205 is continued in this verse also. When such a person comes to power and enters upon a career of disorder and destruction, he becomes deaf to advice and good counsel. Nay, if anyone makes bold to offer him a word of advice, he flares up and becomes all the more stiffened in his tendency towards mischief-making. A false sense of dignity and prestige is his chief stumbling block, his vanity inciting him to further acts of sin, till his pride virtually encompasses him on all sides. Such a one paves his own way to Hell, which is indeed a bad resting place.

The word حسب (sufficient) in the clause, *Hell shall be his sufficient reward*, points to the fact that as such a man is never contented in this life, and is always hungering for more wealth and more power and more dominion, so nothing in this world would suffice him. He will find satisfaction and sufficiency only in the fire of

Hell. Similarly, the word مهاد (place of rest) points to the fact that the man who tramples on the rights of others in order to secure comfort for himself will find no rest in this life ; his only rest will be in Hell.

214. Important Words :

رؤف (Compassionate) is derived from راف. They say راف به meaning, he pitied him, he was compassionate to him. رافة (compassion) is like رحمة (mercy) but signifies greater tenderness, though the latter is certainly more extensive in meaning. رؤف means, compassionate or pitiful, and is one of the attributes of God, though like رحيم it may also be applied to human beings as in 9 : 128 (Lane).

Commentary :

Having completed the description of an extreme type of man belonging to the first-mentioned class of people, i.e., those who seek only the things of this world, the Quran now describes a type of man belonging to the second-mentioned class, i.e., those who seek the good things of this world as well as of the next. And of these it singles out here the noblest type whose aim is to seek the pleasure of God alone. To such men the good things of this world mean only such spiritual blessings as are vouchsafed to righteous men in this very world or such things as lead to the attainment thereof (2:202). Their sole concern is to seek the pleasure of their Lord, as if they had given away their souls for that very purpose. They use the things of this world, not because these things please them, but because God's law has made them the support of a life which they find

209. O ye who believe, come into submission wholly and "follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely, he is your open enemy."²¹⁵

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٠٩﴾

^aSee 2 : 169.

pleasure in devoting to the service of God. Thus they approach the things of this world not directly but through God. To such servants of His, God is indeed most Compassionate and His compassion for them has a good leaven of tenderness in it.

215. Important Words :

السلام (submission) is derived from سلم meaning, he was or became safe from danger or disease or defect, etc. ساه means, he made peace with him. اسلم means, he submitted; he embraced Islam. السلم therefore, means (1) submission; (2) peace; (3) the religion of Islam (Aqrab).

كافة (wholly) is derived from كف. They say كفى الاناء meaning, he filled the vessel to the full. كف الشيء means, he collected the thing all in one place. كف عن الامر فكف means, he turned him away from it and consequently he (the latter) kept back; he prevented or restrained him from the affair, so that, as a result thereof, he (the latter) desisted from it. Thus كف is both transitive and intransitive. كافة is the feminine from كاف and means: (1) all together with none standing aside (Aqrab); (2) wholly or completely, not partially or half-heartedly (Lane); (3) preventing the enemy and turning him back; and (4) restraining oneself, or restraining the people, from sin and digression (Mufradât).

Commentary :

Having completed the description of the two classes of men along with their sub-divisions in the previous verses, the Quran now fittingly addresses believers generally and those weak in

faith particularly, calling upon them to try to be reckoned among the best and noblest type of men. To attain this end they should do two things, one positive and the other negative: (1) Individually they should come into submission or, in other words, they should enter Islam, wholly. Partial submission and half-hearted obedience will not do; and collectively they should try to offer submission all together, allowing no member to stand aside and remain outside the circle. (2) They should eschew the ways of Satan, who is an open enemy of Islam and is out to cut all holy ties asunder (2 : 169).

Besides the above two meanings, the clause ادخلوا في السلم كافة (come into submission wholly) is capable of yet another meaning. As كافة also means, restraining or turning one back, the clause may be translated as, "come into submission wholly, shutting all such doors through which sin may enter." This is indeed a most comprehensive advice and can save many a soul, if people only care to act up to it.

The word خطوات (footsteps) in the clause *follow not the footsteps of Satan*, apparently seems to be superfluous, for, "following Satan" seems to give the same meaning as "following in his footsteps," but it is not so really. The word خطوات (footsteps) has been very wisely added to hint that those who follow Satan do so slavishly and blindly. Just as a blind man who cannot see his way finds it convenient to place his hand on the shoulder of a passer-by and then blindly tread on in his footsteps, so do they.

210. But if you slip after the clear Signs that have come to you, then know that Allah is Mighty and Wise.²¹⁶

فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَأَعْلَمُوا
أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢١٠﴾

211. "Are they waiting for anything but that Allah should come to them in the coverings of the clouds with angels, and the matter be decided? And to Allah do *all* things return."²¹⁷

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ
الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ

الْأُمُورُ ﴿٢١١﴾ ٢٥
٩

٢٦ : ١٥٩ ; ١٦ : ٣٤ ; ٨٩ : ٢٣.

216. Commentary :

The preceding verse called upon believers, particularly those weak in faith, to try to become perfect Muslims, and pointed out to them the means by which they could become so. The present verse makes it clear that if, even after this warning and after God's clear Signs had come to them, they should slip and digress from the true path, they would find God "Mighty and Wise." hinting that in that case they would rightly deserve punishment by the Wise God Who possesses the power to punish.

The word "Wise" also hints that erring ones should not despair; for, God being Wise, He has kept the way open for their return to the right faith. In fact, the liability of man to err is not without purpose. In His eternal wisdom, God has made man a free agent who is liable to err, so that his error might serve as an incentive for him to rise again and make a redoubled effort towards the ideal.

217. Important Words :

يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ (Allah should come to them) is a metaphorical expression, meaning, Allah should come to them with His punishment, i.e., Allah should punish them. The metaphor إِيَّاكَ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ i.e. coming of God, is used by the Quran elsewhere also (16 : 27 ;

59 : 3). In contrast to this, the Quran uses the metaphor تَوْبَ اللَّهِ i.e. turning of God, to express His turning with mercy (2 : 38 ; 9 : 117.) Similarly, إِيَّاكَ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ i.e. the coming of the angels, indicates their coming with punishment.

ظُلَلٍ (coverings) is the plural of ظِلَّة (ẓilla) which is derived from ظَل and اظْل, the latter word meaning, he or it afforded or cast a shadow. But whereas ظِل (ẓill) the plural of which is ظلال or اظلال, means, shadow, ظِلَّة whose plural is ظلال, means, a covering or a shade, i.e., a thing that casts or gives a shade or a shadow (Aqrab). The word ظِلَّة or ظلال is generally used in connection with punishment (Mufradāt).

الْغَمَام (clouds) for which see 2 : 58. The word has been used by the Quran both in connection with mercy (7 : 161) and punishment (25 : 26).

Commentary :

The form of speech has been changed here from the second to the third person. The verse has apparently been addressed to either disbelievers or to hypocrites and the weak in faith. If it be taken to refer to disbelievers, as the change of form in the address indicates, it would mean that by desisting from belief they are, as it were, waiting for the punishment of God, and the verse incidentally hints that the

- R. 26 212. Ask of the children of Israel
 "how many clear Signs We gave them.
 But whoso changes the gift of Allah
 after it has come to him, surely then,
 Allah is severe in punishing."²¹⁸

سَلْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ كَمَا آتَيْنَاهُم مِّنْ آيَةٍ يُبَيِّنُ
 وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ
 اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢١٢﴾

^a17 : 102 ; 28 : 37.

appointed punishment would come to them through raining clouds. The reference is to the Battle of Badr, when God helped believers by sending down clouds and rain (Bukhārī), as was promised (25 : 26), and also sent down angels (8 : 10) who inspired the believers with courage and filled the hearts of the disbelievers with fear (8 : 13). Some of the disbelievers are reported to have actually seen the angels on that day (Zurqānī). The matter was then "decided"; for, on that memorable day, all the chief leaders of the Quraish were killed, the Muslims obtaining a decisive victory which broke the power of the enemy. The coming of clouds refers to the rainfall which on the battlefield of Badr proved a blessing for the Muslims. It made the sand firm for them, while the land on the side of the enemy, being clayey, became slippery.

If, however, the verse be taken to refer to the hypocrites or the weak in faith, as the preceding two verses would suggest, then the clause, *that Allah should come to them in the coverings of the clouds*, would mean that if they did not mend their ways, God would have to chastise them even though they were apparently resting in the shade of faith, which is likened to a غمام or cloud. As shown under Important Words above, the word غمام (clouds) is sometimes used in connection with God's mercy (7 : 161).

218. Commentary :

The preceding verses referred to those weak in faith who had not yet "come into submission

wholly" (2 : 209). The position of these people was this that they had received a favour of God but practically they sought to "change" it. They wished to be known as Muslims and yet to be free to live as they liked. This was exactly what the Israelites had done before. So the Quran fittingly turns here to the story of the children of Israel who afforded an object-lesson for Muslims. The Holy Prophet and, for that matter, every reader of the Quran is asked to enquire of the descendants of Israel how many and how varied were the Signs which God had bestowed upon them as a favour and how persistent and impudent was their rejection of His Messengers and their disregard of His teachings.

The expression, *whoso changes the gift of God*, appears to be rather peculiar; but really the word يبدِّل (changes) gives a very interesting meaning. For believers it means, accepting the teaching of a Prophet in theory but rejecting it in practice, as unfortunately is very often the case with the weak in faith. They receive a thing as a gift or blessing, but by abstaining from acting upon it they incur the displeasure of God, thus practically "changing" a favour into a disfavour.

For disbelievers the expression means converting a مَبشَر Prophet into a مَنذَر Prophet. The Quran speaks of the Prophets of God as a نعمة i.e. a favour or gift (5 : 21) and it further holds that the mission of every Prophet is twofold—he is a مَبشَر or bearer of glad tidings for those who accept him, and he is a مَنذَر or

213. "The life of this world is made to appear attractive to those who disbelieve; and they scoff at those who believe. But those who fear God shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and Allah bestows His gifts on whomsoever He pleases without reckoning."²¹⁹

زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ
الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ
وَاللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢١٣﴾

^a3 : 15 ; 18 : 47 ; 57 : 21. ^b3 : 38 ; 24 : 39 ; 35 : 4 ; 40 : 41.

warner of coming punishment for those who reject him (18 : 57). Now when God sends a Prophet He wishes the people to accept him as a bearer of glad tidings only, and it is the people themselves who reverse the position by rejecting him. In this way the people, as it were, "change" the *مبشر* Prophet into the *منذر* Prophet.

Again, for Israelites or Jews the expression, *whoso changes the gift of Allah*, may mean that though they knew that their scriptures embodied the word of God which was a favour and a blessing, yet they had the audacity to interfere with it in order to meet their own ends (5 : 14), thus "changing" the very substance of God's favour.

The expression may have yet another meaning. The *شرية* or Law being meant as a guidance, is a mercy or a blessing of God (5 : 4 and 6 : 155, 156). But Christians, who are an offshoot of the Jews have "changed" it into a curse (Gal. 3 : 13).

The expression "gift of God" may refer to the manifold and multifarious favours which God had bestowed upon the Israelites in the form of Prophets and their noble teachings. But they "changed" the gift of God by rejecting the Prophets and disobeying their teachings. The expression may also refer to the Holy Prophet and the religion brought by him; they are certainly the greatest gifts of God for mankind, and whoever rejects Islam either by disbelieving in, or by disobeying, its teachings deserves

God's severest punishment. In either case the verse also warns hypocrites and those weak of faith among Muslims that if they accepted the Holy Prophet outwardly but rejected him in their heart or if they accepted his teachings as being from God but did not act upon them, they would be "changing" the gift of God and would make themselves liable to severe punishment.

219. Important Words :

زَيْن (is made to appear attractive) is passive voice from *زَان* which is derived from *زَان الشَّيْءِ* or *زَيْن الشَّيْءِ* meaning, he decorated or embellished or beautified the thing so as to make it look attractive (Aqrab).

يَسْخَرُونَ (they scoff) is formed from *سَخَرَ*. They say *سَخَرَهُ* or *سَخَرَمَهُ* i.e. (1) he mocked at or scoffed at or laughed at him; he derided or ridiculed him; (2) he cut a joke with him or made a jest of him; (3) he deemed him ignorant (Aqrab & Lane).

فَوْقَهُمْ (above them). The word *فَوْق* is the infinitive noun from *فَاقَ*. They say *فَاقَهُ* i.e. he was above him or was superior to him (in any sense); he excelled him in rank, eminence, nobility, knowledge or any other good quality; he overcame him in argument (Aqrab & Lane).

يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ (the Day of Resurrection) is a compound expression being made up of *يَوْم* (day) and *الْقِيٰمَةِ* (resurrection). The word *يَوْم*

(day) is also used to denote time generally, as already explained in 1:4; and القيامة (resurrection) is derived from قام meaning, (1) he stood up, or (2) he stood still. The expression قامت الساعة means, the appointed hour of resurrection came to pass. القيامة therefore, means the rising of the dead or the Resurrection (Aqrab). The word is also used for such occasions on which people leave their homes and gather in a place in response to a call, as in the Friday Prayers (Tāj). Thus figuratively the word القيامة (resurrection) may denote a state of unusual life and activity following a state of inertia and lifelessness. The word القيامة is really القيام (the act of standing) which is the noun-infinitive from قام, the final ة being added to denote the act of resurrection being sudden and all together (Mufradāt).

Commentary :

As the preceding verse spoke of those who change the gift of God by rejecting it or refusing to act upon it, the present verse fittingly provides the underlying reason of such rejection or refusal. The attention of these people is devoted to the affairs of this world, which appear so attractive to them as to leave no room in their hearts for God and His Messenger. The فاعل or author of the act denoted by the verb زين which is in the passive voice has not been named here; but elsewhere the Quran clearly states that it is Satan who has taken upon himself to make the things of this world look beautiful and attractive in the eyes of unbelieving people (15:40), who thus become engrossed in the affairs of the world.

Intoxicated with their material gains and worldly possessions, disbelievers, and for that matter, hypocrites also, look down upon believers and scoff at them when they see their apparently low worldly position and hear promises of victory and future greatness being made to them. In view of the utter helplessness of the believers, they cannot possibly

bring themselves to conceive that believers will ever become heirs to that eminence and glory which is promised to them by God and, therefore, they treat such promises with contempt. But truth has always triumphed over falsehood in the end. The history of all religions and particularly that of Islam bears undeniable testimony to this fact.

The clause, *but those who fear God shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection*, does not mean that the triumph of the Faithful over disbelievers will be confined to the next world only. The words "the Day of Resurrection" have been added to point out that whereas believers will also triumph in this world, as borne out by the facts of history, their triumph in the next world will be complete and perpetual. These words may also refer, according to Arab usage, to the time of the downfall of disbelievers and the rise of the Faithful in this very world. In this sense the clause would signify, "wait a while, for the appointed time is not far distant when Muslims will triumph over their enemies and will be above them in all respects," i.e., in knowledge, wealth, power, etc.—a fact to which the early history of Islam in Medina, Damascus, Baghdad, Egypt, Spain, etc., bears ample testimony. To quote only one instance, i.e., that of the Arabs being in their time above the rest of the world in science, Robert Briffault says: "The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal to Arab culture; it owes its existence" (*The Making of Humanity*).

It will be noted that while making the promise of future greatness the verse substitutes the expression "those who fear God" for the expression "those who believe." This change has been made to point to the fact that to obtain triumph mere ايمان (belief) is not enough; the Muslims should effect a real change in themselves, by attaining تقوى or God-fearingness.

214. Mankind were one community, then they differed among themselves, so "Allah raised Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and sent down with them the Book containing the truth that He might judge between the people wherein they differed. But now they began to differ about the Book, and none differed about it except those to whom it was given, after clear Signs had come to them, out of envy towards one another. Now has Allah, by His command, guided the believers to the truth in regard to which they (the unbelievers) differed; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the right path."²²⁰

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُحْكَمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢١٤﴾

“4 : 166 ; 6 : 49 ; 18 : 57.

The phrase “without reckoning” may mean three things: (1) that the favours and gifts of God know no ending; for a thing that does not end cannot be reckoned; (2) that God bestows upon believers more favours and more gifts than they appear to deserve, the more so because believers spend in the cause of God to the utmost of their power without keeping an account of what they spend, so God also showers His blessings upon them without reckoning; (3) that God treats the believers as friends; and as people do not keep an account of what they give to their friends, therefore God also keeps no account of what He gives to the Faithful.

As to the relevancy of this clause to the previous one, it may be noted that as God promised to grant special victory and unusual greatness to believers—so much so that they were to be “above” the disbelievers in all respects when the time of “resurrection” (i.e. the fall of the disbelievers and the rise of the believers) came—the question naturally arose, how out of all proportion to their efforts and

resources were the handful of believers going to attain this glorious triumph? In reply to this implied question, the Quran says that the people need not doubt this prophecy; for the matter is not to be settled by ordinary rules of cause and effect but by the fact, so amply borne out by history, that “Allah bestows His favours on whomsoever He pleases without reckoning.” In this connection we may well quote from Carlyle who, while speaking of the spectacular rise of Islam to power, says: “These Arabs, the man Mohammad, one spark on a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand; but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Granada!” (*On Heroes and Hero Worship*).

220. Commentary :

In the preceding verses different classes of people—believers and disbelievers together with their sub-divisions—have been mentioned. The verse under comment not only traces the genesis of these classes but also hints to Muslims that, just as the world began with all people as one

community, God now wishes them again to become one community through the Holy Prophet who, unlike previous Prophets, came with a universal mission.

The clause, *Mankind were one community*, may mean: (1) mankind i.e. all men were originally one people; (2) all disbelievers are one people. In the first-mentioned case, the verse would mean that, in the beginning of the world, all mankind were one people. They had no social rules, no polity, no civic laws. Then in the course of time, differences arose among them with regard to these things. So God sent to them Prophets to guide them how to live good and useful lives.

In the second case, the meaning of the clause would be that before the advent of a Prophet all men are like one people in the sense that they are all disbelievers, and disbelief and wrongdoing reign supreme in the world. But when a Prophet appears, all people, in spite of their mutual differences, form one united front against him. This meaning is in harmony with the well-known saying of the Holy Prophet, الكفر ملة واحدة i.e. all disbelievers (to whatever creed or religion they may belong) are one people.

The clause, *and sent down with them the Book*, does not mean that God revealed a separate Book to every Prophet. In that case, "Books," instead of "the Book," would have been the appropriate word. In fact, the "sending down of a Book" to a Prophet does not always mean the actual revelation of it to him in person. The Quran uses similar words with regard to those Prophets who were not the direct recipients of any revealed Book (6 : 115, 157, 158 ; 3 : 73, 200 ; 29 : 47 ; 21 : 11). The clause, therefore, only means that every Prophet has received a Book from God, whether it was revealed to him direct or whether it was revealed to a previous Prophet whose mission he was called upon to serve.

The "difference" referred to in the verse at two separate places signifies two different kinds of disagreement. Before the advent of a Prophet people differ among themselves about false beliefs and idolatrous practices. But after the appearance of the truth, they begin to differ with regard to the truth itself. The advent of a Prophet, however, does not, as may be wrongly imagined, create differences. The differences are already there; they merely assume a new form. But whereas before a Prophet has made his appearance the people, in spite of their differences, look like one people, they become divided into two distinct camps, believers and disbelievers, after he has appeared.

The clause, *out of envy towards one another*, points to the important fact that invariably the root-cause of the rejection of a Prophet is jealousy. Disbelievers cannot reconcile themselves to the idea that an ordinary person from among them, generally inferior to many of them in wealth, power or social status, should be made their teacher and leader. Disbelievers also consider it below their dignity to ally themselves with a community a large majority of whose members are of humble origin, as is often the case with the early followers of divine Messengers.

The clause, *Now has Allah, by His command, guided believers to the truth in regard to which they (the unbelievers) differed*, refers to the advent of the Holy Prophet who was raised by God with a universal mission to remove the differences of all the peoples of the earth. The expression *بأمره* translated as "by His command" may also mean "according to His eternal decree." In the beginning of the world God willed that the final Law-giving Prophet should come with a universal mission and should constitute, as it were, the zenith of the system of النبوة or prophecy. Says the Holy Prophet "I was a Prophet of God while Adam was yet in the making between the body and the soul" (Tirmidhi).

215. "Do you think that you will enter Heaven while there has not come over you the condition of those who passed away before you? Poverty and afflictions befell them, and they were violently shaken until the Messenger and those who believed along with him said: 'When will come the help of Allah?' Yea, surely the help of Allah is nigh."²²¹

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ
الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسْتَهْمُ الْبَاسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ
وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ
مَنْ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا أَنْ نَصْرَ اللَّهُ قَرِيبٌ ۝١٥

^a3 : 143 ; 9 : 16. ^bSee 2 : 178. ^c12 : 111.

Viewed collectively, the verse describes five different stages through which mankind has passed: (1) When there was unity among the people, all forming one community. This was in the beginning of the human race. (2) When, with the increase in population and the extension of interests and the complexity of problems confronting man, people began to differ among themselves. (3) When God raised Prophets among different peoples and different countries to show them the right path and revealed His will to the various contending sections. (4) When the very revelation of God sent to remove differences was made a cause of difference by the mischievous people. (5) When God finally raised the Holy Prophet with His last Book and a universal mission, calling upon entire humanity to rally round his banner. Thus a beautiful circle was completed and the world which began with unity was designed to end with it.

221. Important Words :

زُلْزِلُوا (violently shaken) is from زَلَزَلَ or زَل. They say زَلَزَلَ اللَّهُ الْأَرْضَ i.e. God made the earth quake violently or put the earth in a state of convulsion or violent motion. زَلَزَلَهُ means, he put him or it in a state of commotion or agitation or violent motion; he put him in a state of great fear or terror. الزَّلْزَلَةُ which is the noun-infinitive from زَلَزَلَ means: (1) violent shaking or commotion; (2) earthquake. The

word is also used, especially in its plural form, to denote afflictions, miseries and trials (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

In the preceding two verses God promised believers a reward "without reckoning" and called upon them to strive to bring all the peoples of the world under the banner of Islam so that they might become one people. The fulfilment of this great promise and the attainment of this noble object necessitated unusual sacrifices on the part of the Faithful, to which the verse under comment fittingly draws the attention of Muslims.

Indeed, acceptance of the message of Islam was no bed of roses, and Muslims were warned that they would have to pass through a fiery ordeal of trials and tribulations before they could hope to achieve their sublime ideal. Incidentally, they were also told that the sufferings and hardships they had already undergone were nothing as compared with the trials that were yet in store for them. They were being mentally prepared to meet the storm which was brewing in Mecca and which reached its culmination in the Battle of the Ditch.

The word الْجَنَّة literally meaning garden and translated here as "Heaven" need not necessarily refer to the Heaven vouchsafed to the Faithful in the Hereafter. The word

216. They ask thee what they shall spend. Say: "Whatever of good and abundant wealth you spend should be for parents and near relatives and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, surely Allah knows it well".²²²

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ۖ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ
خَيْرٍ فَلِلَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِئَاتِ وَالأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ
وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ
عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١٦﴾

^a2 : 178 ; 4 : 37.

is also used to express a state of success and prosperity in this very world. Nay, God has definitely promised in the Quran that the righteous would have جنة or Heaven even in this life (55 : 47). In this sense the word "Heaven" in this verse would refer to the great success and prosperity promised to Muslims in the preceding verses.

The word حتى translated as *until* also means, so that or in order that. According to the latter signification, the verse would mean that God proves or tries the Prophet and the believers with difficulties and hardships and withholds His help from them so that they may invoke it by earnest prayers and supplications. This is a beautiful way by which God manifests His love for the Prophet and his followers. He delights in treating them like children, wishing them to beg of Him so that He may give them.

The pathetic cry for help embodied in the words, *when will come the help of Allah?* does not denote despair, because an attitude of despair on the part of a Prophet of God and his followers is inconceivable, being inconsistent with true faith (12 : 88). The words are simply a form of prayer, a way of earnestly beseeching God to expedite His help, and not an expression denoting despair and disappointment. The reply given by God in the words, *Yea, surely the help of Allah is nigh*, also corroborates this interpretation ; for, if the words of the Faithful

had been expressive of despair, God would certainly not have answered in that loving manner but would have taken notice of it.

222. Important Words :

خير (good and abundant wealth). See 2 : 181.
اقربين (near relatives) is the plural of اقرب
(derived from قريب) meaning, one nearer ; a near relative (Aqrab).

Commentary :

When the Companions of the Holy Prophet were told that they could not win the pleasure of God and enter Heaven unless they were made to pass through sufferings and afflictions like those that had gone before, they at once signified their readiness to part with their wealth and property in the cause of God and asked the Holy Prophet to let them know what they should spend in order to win the promised Heaven. They were so eager to win the pleasure of God and attain spiritual progress that they did not wait for the threatened trials actually to overtake them, but were prepared to make every kind of sacrifice in advance. They simply wanted to be told what form their sacrifice should take.

In reply to their eager question, God's reply also indicates a sort of eagerness, as if He meant to impart to the Faithful the relevant commandment in its entirety, without waiting for any further question on their part ; for whereas their question related only to "what" they should spend, God's answer

217. "Fighting is ordained for you, though it is repugnant to you; but it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you like a thing while it is bad for you. Allah knows *all things*, and you know not."²²³

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ٢١٧

8 : 6.

goes a step further, describing also "on whom" the money is to be spent. As to the question, what is to be spent, the answer is "good and abundant wealth", hinting that the money to be spent should be (1) well-acquired and (2) abundant. In moments of great national need there can be no hope of success unless people spend freely and generously. But as free and generous expenditure carries with it the danger of weak people resorting to acquiring wealth by unfair means, therefore the condition about the money being "good" has been added.

As to the other part of the anticipated question i.e. on whom should the money be spent, the Quran says that money should be spent *on parents and near relatives* (lit. near ones) *and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer*. These five classes include all such persons as generally stand in need of help. The two first-mentioned classes include relatives, neighbours and friends who go to form the group that immediately surrounds a man and must claim his first attention, owing to personal relationship or personal contact. Then follow two classes that deserve help owing to their particular circumstances, orphans being without anyone to support them and the needy without any means of support. Lastly comes the wayfarer, whose claim consists in his being a stranger, with no friend, no relative and no supporter. By pointing out these five classes as deserving of help, the Quran desires to hint that unless the

entire community, including those who come to stay with them temporarily, is prepared to fight in the cause of Allah and unless the well-to-do classes help the weaker ones in their preparation for the national struggle, Muslims cannot present a united front nor can their efforts bring about the desired result. Each and every person must gird up his loins to contribute his fullest possible share, and those who cannot do so for want of means must receive help from others who can afford such help.

223. Important Words :

كره (repugnant) is the noun-infinitive from كره i.e. he disliked. كره means, a thing which is disliked; a thing which one is required to do against his wish or liking (Aqrab).

Commentary :

In 2 : 215 God warned Muslims that in order to reach the promised goal they must pass through an ordeal of poverty, afflictions and violent shakings. In conformity with the ordeal of poverty, verse 2 : 216 called upon them to be prepared to make great monetary sacrifices. Now in the verse under comment, God refers to the ordeal of afflictions and violent shakings by drawing the attention of the Faithful to the menace of war surrounding them. As, however, Muslims were averse from war, the verse also enjoins them to put implicit trust in the guidance of Allah; for, *it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you.*

27 218. They ask thee about fighting in the Sacred Month. Say : ' Fighting therein is a great transgression, but to hinder men from the way of Allah, and to be ungrateful to Him and the Sacred Mosque, and to turn out its people therefrom, is a greater sin with Allah ; and "persecution is worse than killing.' And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can. And 'whoso from among you turns back from his faith and dies while he is a disbeliever, it is they 'whose works shall be vain in this world and the next. These are the inmates of the Fire and therein shall they abide.'²²⁴

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ وَصَدٌّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوا وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢١٨﴾

^{a2} : 192. ^{b3} : 87, 91 ; 4 : 138 ; 5 : 55 ; 47 : 26. ^{c3} : 23 ; 7 : 148 ; 18 : 106.

But the aversion of the Holy Prophet's Companions from war was not due to cowardice. They did not dislike war because they thought that they were few in number or because they were not properly equipped. History gives the direct lie to all such insinuations. Muslims hated war, because they did not like to shed human blood ; also because they thought that a peaceful atmosphere was more conducive to the propagation of Islam than a state of war, for the obvious reason that the atmosphere of peace gave disbelievers more opportunities for dispassionate consideration of the noble teachings of Islam.

But it was too late. The leaders of the disbelievers had gone too far in their evil designs against Islam and were bent upon extirpating the New Faith. It was evidently a war of self-defence, and he who shirks a war of self-defence commits an act of suicide (22 : 40, 41). Thus the verse constitutes an eloquent testimony to the love of peace of the Holy Prophet's Companions and a convincing

repudiation of the mischievous accusation that it was for the sake of booty or for spreading their faith by force that the early Muslims resorted to arms.

The clause, *it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you like a thing while it is bad for you*, points to a very important principle, i.e., that errors of judgement mostly result from two causes : (1) abuse of the sentiment of love ; and (2) abuse of the sentiment of dislike or hatred. One should, therefore, be particularly careful about one's judgement when one is swayed by either of these two sentiments. They undermine dispassionate thinking as nothing else does. Elsewhere the Quran gives a still clearer warning to Muslims to beware of the abuse of the sentiments of love and hatred (64 : 15, 16 & 5 : 9).

224. Important Words :

كَبِيرٌ (great transgression) really stands for ذَنْبٌ كَبِيرٌ i.e. a great sin or great transgression or great offence. أَكْبَرُ is in the

comparative degree and means, a greater sin, etc.

صد (to hinder) is the infinitive from صد. They say صد i.e. he prevented him; he turned him back. صد عنه أو منه means, he kept back from it. Thus the word is both transitive and intransitive. صد, therefore, means: (1) to hinder or to prevent; (2) a hindrance or a barrier; (3) a mountain or a wall, etc., because it serves as a barrier (Aqrah).

يردوكم (turn you back) and يردد (turns back) are both derived from رد. They say رده i.e. he turned him back; and ارتد i.e. he himself turned back. ارتد عن الاسلام means, he turned back from Islam and reverted to a state of disbelief. مرتد means, one who turns back from his religion, particularly from Islam; one who apostatizes (Tāj).

حبط (shall be in vain). حبط البعير means, the stomach of the camel became inflated and his belly became bound by eating unwholesome food. حبط عمله means: (1) his work or deed became null and void and went for nothing; (2) his work or deed became evil and corrupt. حبط دمه means, his blood went unavenged. حبط ماء البئر means, the water of the well receded and went down never to return to its original level (Aqrah & Lane).

Commentary :

The words translated as "to be ungrateful to Him and the Sacred Mosque" may also be rendered as "to be ungrateful to Him and to hinder men from the Sacred Mosque."

The Quran has already explained that if disbelievers violate the sanctity of a Sacred Month, Muslims may also retaliate in a Sacred Month; for thus only can the sanctity of a sacred thing be safeguarded (2 : 195).

The present verse provides a further reason for defending Islam, if need be, in a Sacred Month. Disbelievers, particularly those of Mecca, had violated the sanctity of things far more sacred than a "Sacred Month"—they

were trying forcibly to turn men from the way of God; they were preventing people from approaching the Sacred Mosque and they had forced the Muslim dwellers of Mecca to flee from it. This was a form of persecution which was certainly much more heinous than fighting in a Sacred Month.

Commentators generally state, and in fact there are also traditions to the effect, that once the Holy Prophet sent one of his Companions, named 'Abdullāh bin Jahsh, to bring news about a party of the Quraish proceeding to Mecca. When 'Abdullāh and his comrades reached a place called Nakhla, they met a small party proceeding to Mecca. Guided by his own judgement and without any instructions to that effect from the Prophet, 'Abdullāh attacked the party, killing one of them and capturing two. The date was doubtful, some considering it to be as one of the Sacred Month and others as not. When the news reached Mecca, the Quraish took advantage of the doubt as regards date and clamoured that the Muslims had violated the Sacred Month. The verse under comment was revealed on that occasion (Ṭabarī, Hishām & Zurqānī).

The verse acknowledges the sanctity of the Sacred Months and considers it an act of sin and transgression knowingly to fight in a Sacred Month, but forcefully points out that the sanctities which disbelievers were violating were far more worthy of safeguarding. Disbelievers were forcibly preventing people from accepting Islam. They did not allow Muslims to approach the Sacred Mosque and they had mercilessly turned the Prophet and his followers out of their homes.

The verse should not be understood to imply that Muslims did start a fight in a Sacred Month, it only purports to bring home to disbelievers the fact that in view of their persistent violation of highly sacred things, it does not lie in their mouth to accuse Muslims of violating the sanctity of a Sacred Month.

219. Those who believe and "those who emigrate and strive hard in the cause of Allah, it is these who hope for Allah's Mercy; and Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful."²²⁵

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢١٩﴾

^a8 : 75 ; 9 : 20.

The clause, *it is they whose works shall be vain in this world and the next*, does not mean that everything that a renegade from Islam, or, for that matter, everything that a disbeliever, does will go for nothing and produce no result. The clause only means that such actions of the renegades as they might do to weaken the cause of Islam in this world as well as those of their actions which they might perform in opposition to the teachings of Islam in order to win the pleasure of God in the world to come will all be in vain. Thus the clause does not refer to such good actions as a person may perform in the state of unbelief; for, as the Quran expressly states, these must have their reward (99 : 8) which may either take the form of the acceptance of Islam or that of the lightening of punishment. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said about his uncle Abū Tālib that on account of the good treatment the latter extended to him, he is likely to be only lightly punished for his non-acceptance of Islam (Bukhārī). On another occasion when Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām, a nephew of his wife Khadīja, asked the Prophet whether he would get any reward for the good deeds he did before he accepted Islam, the Holy Prophet said, "Your very acceptance of Islam is a reward thereof" (Bukhārī).

The clause, *their works shall be vain in this world and the next*, also signifies that if such men as apostatize from Islam had not done so, their deeds would have brought them the great reward promised to Muslims both in this world and the next, but by apostatizing from Islam

they had totally deprived themselves of this twofold reward.

Finally, the clause, *and they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can*, throws a flood of light on the attitude of disbelievers towards Muslims. They were not only the first to begin hostilities, but had also vowed not to cease fighting until Islam had been totally wiped out from Arabia and not a soul remained to call himself a Muslim. This clear testimony of the Quran should be an eye-opener for those who accuse Muslims of being aggressors in their early struggle against disbelievers. The words, *if they can*, are highly eulogistic of the Companions of the Holy Prophet. Do what they could, disbelievers would never be able to turn back Muslims from their faith. Their love for Islam was too deep to be extirpated by persecution, however severe and bitter it might be.

225. Important Words :

هَاجَرُوا (emigrated) is derived from هَجَرَ. They say هَجَرَ الشَّيْءَ i.e. (1) he cut it or he severed it; (2) he avoided it or kept away from it, or he gave it up. هَاجَرَ means, he left one place to settle in another (Aqrab). The word is particularly used about one who leaves a place where religion is persecuted and goes to a place where there is no such persecution, especially to a place where there exists means of serving and supporting the faith. The early Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina were known as مَهاجِرِينَ i.e. those who left Mecca and

220. They ask thee concerning "wine and the game of hazard. Say: 'In both there is great sin and also some advantages for men; but their sin is greater than their advantage.' And they ask thee what they should spend. Say: 'Spend what you can spare.' Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to you that you may reflect,²²⁶

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ
كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا
وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٢٠﴾

25: 91, 92.

settled in Medina with the intention of helping the cause of Islam.

جاهدوا (strive hard) is derived from جهد which means, he strove or laboured hard, taking extraordinary pains. جهد في الامر means, he used his utmost power in prosecuting the affair. جاهد العدو means, he fought with the enemy exerting his utmost effort to repel him, his enemy doing the like. جهاد means, exerting one's utmost power in contending with an object of disapprobation; and this is of three kinds, namely, (1) with a visible enemy (2) with Satan, and (3) with one's self (Lane).

رجو (who hope) is derived from رجا which gives twofold meaning. They say رجا الشيء meaning: (1) he hoped to get the thing; (2) he was afraid of the thing (Aqrab). When used in the sense of hoping, it is used on occasions when the thing hoped for is likely to afford pleasure (Mufradāt).

Commentary :

The verse holds out the promise to Muslims, and they are indeed buoyed up with the hope, that though now they are beset with great difficulties and unusual hardships, the time is fast approaching when all difficulties would disappear and they would become heirs to God's mercy both in this world and the next.

As the context shows, the words, *those who*

believe, occurring in the verse refer to such of the believers as resided in Medina and had not been called upon to emigrate. Thus the verse mentions two classes of believers who can hope to get Allah's mercy; (1) believers resident in Medina i.e. the Helpers, who engaged themselves in جهاد or holy war against the forces of Satan; and (2) Emigrants from Mecca who were also engaged in such war. The words, *Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful*, have been added to point out that Allah will forgive the above-mentioned two classes of believers their sins and shortcomings which will not stand in the way of their winning God's mercy, provided they remain sincere in their faith and continue striving hard in the cause of Allah, for, as the Quran elsewhere explains, the good works of a man drive away his evil ones (11 : 115).

226. Important Words :

خمر (wine) is the noun-infinitive from خمر. They say خمر الشيء meaning, he veiled or covered up the thing. خمر الشهادة means, he concealed the evidence. خمر العجين means, he leavened the dough and left it till it became well fermented. خمره means, it became mixed or blended with it; it infected or pervaded it. A veil worn by a woman is called حمار because it screens or covers her face and head. Wine is called خمر because it covers or obscures or infects the intellect or the senses, or because it agitates and excites the brain so as to make it

uncontrolled. The word is specific for wine prepared from grapes but is also used generally (Aqrab & Lane).

يسر (game of hazard) is derived from يَسِرُ i.e. he became docile and submissive. يَسِرَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ means, the woman was easily delivered of the child. يَسِرَ الرَّجُلُ means, the man became well off. يَسِرُ فُلَانٌ means, such a one played a game of hazard or a game of chance i.e. he gambled. Thus the primary meaning of the word is to get a thing easily and thereby become well off. A game of chance or a game of hazard is called مَيْسِر because by means of such games people seek to become rich easily and quickly without undergoing the trouble of earning with work and labour. The word الميسر is used to indicate (1) any game of hazard or game of chance; (2) a game of hazard played by the Arabs with headless arrows; (3) play for stakes and wages (Lisān & Mufradāt).

اِثْم (sin) is the noun-infinitive from اِثْمَ meaning, he did what was unlawful. اِثْمٌ means: (1) that which is unlawful (Aqrab); (2) that which keeps back a person from what is good (Mufradāt); (3) punishment of sins and evil actions (Lane).

عَفْر (spare) is derived from عَفَرَ. They say عَفَرَ الشَّيْءُ i.e. the thing became long and abundant. عَفْرٌ means: (1) what exceeds or remains over and above one's requirements; (2) the best portion of a thing (Aqrab).

Commentary :

While dealing with the subject of war, the Quran fittingly turns to the subject of wine and gambling which are directly related to war.

It was a custom among the Arabs that in time of war they used to cast lots in the name of a few wealthy persons, and those in whose names the lots were drawn were bound to feed the army and supply it with wine. This is how the Arabs defrayed the expenses of war. So when Muslims were called upon to take up arms, they naturally enquired of the Holy

Prophet about the legality of this peculiar way of meeting the expenses of war and about the use of wine also, which was considered essential to produce a state of reckless courage in the fighters so as to make them blind to all consequences. Islam declared both these practices unlawful because their harm was greater than their advantage. The conviction of faith had infused into the hearts of believers far greater and nobler courage than the blind daring engendered by drinking. Similarly, the expenses of war were to be met in a fairer and more respectable manner than the casting of lots. The burden must fall on all according to their means and must come through willing and eager contributions by the Faithful.

The clause, *their sin is greater than their advantage*, embodies a very important principle. A thing should not be adopted simply because it contains some advantage nor should a thing be condemned simply because it is harmful in certain respects. On the contrary, both sides should be carefully weighed and a thing should be condemned only if its harm outweighs its advantage. It is in fact a great characteristic of Islam that it never condemns a thing wholesale but frankly and freely admits even the smallest good that may be found in it. Islam prohibits certain things not because it considers them to be devoid of all good, for there is nothing in the world which is wholly bad, but because their evil outweighs their good. This is why, while prohibiting the use of intoxicants and games of chance because of their great harm, Islam has not failed to acknowledge the few advantages they possess.

It is worthy of note that of all religions Islam alone has forbidden the use of wine. In Hinduism drinking forms an essential part of certain religious ceremonies. Judaism does not seem to prohibit drinking, because nowhere has the Bible declared it to be unlawful; while according to the New Testament the very first

miracle which Jesus showed was that he turned water into wine for the use of a marriage party (John 2 : 7—9).

Attempts have been made during the ages by social reformers, and even the help of legislation has been enlisted in some countries, to put an end to wine-drinking. But all such attempts have so far failed. The only experiment on record which met with complete success in this direction was that made in Arabia more than thirteen hundred years ago. A whole people steeped in drinking became absolute teetotallers by the mere declaration by the Prophet that God had forbidden drinking. This constitutes no small testimony to the great hold that Islam had come to possess on the minds of the unlettered and unruly Arabs and to the wonderful transformation it had brought about in their lives.

From the meaning of the word *خمر* (wine) as given above under Important Words it should not be understood that Islam prohibits the use of only such quantity of wine as may make one drunk. The Holy Prophet has made it definitely clear that even small doses of such things as may intoxicate one when used in larger doses are unlawful (Tirmidhī).

When the principal means hitherto employed in Arabia for meeting the expenses of war, i.e., by casting lots, was prohibited, the question naturally arose as to how the expenses of war were to be met. Believers, realizing that they would themselves have to meet these expenses, hastened to inquire of the Holy Prophet as to how much they would have to contribute towards the expenses of war. In reply to their query they were told that they should spend *غفر* i.e. what may be spared after meeting the necessities of life. The word *غفر* by virtue of its twofold connotation, given under Important Words above, applies to two different classes of persons. Ordinary believers are required to spend what remains after their needs have been met, i.e., what they can spare ;

and the higher class of believers are expected to go ahead and spend the best portion of their possessions. If, however, the clause be applied collectively to all believers, it would mean that in times of war they should retain for themselves only such portion of their possessions as may suffice to meet their bare necessities of life. The balance should be spent in the cause of God. This is what God wanted them to do. Actually, however, some of the Companions spent even more than that. For instance, when the Holy Prophet appealed for funds for the campaign of Tabūk, Abū Bakr brought his entire possessions and laid them at the feet of his Master. When asked how much he had retained for himself and his family and how much he had brought to be spent in Allah's cause, Abū Bakr replied that he had brought all that he possessed and that nothing remained in his house except the name of Allah (Tirmidhī, ch. on *Manāqib* & *Zurqānī*).

Finally, a word about the sin or harm of wine and gambling as mentioned in the verse under comment appears to be called for. Though Islam was the first to prohibit the use of intoxicants and games of chance, the world now appears to be agreed on condemning these two evils which so deeply affect not only the physical but also the moral and spiritual condition of man. Here are some quotations in which non-Muslim writers have forcefully pointed out the harmful effects of wine :—

(1) "Alcoholism is an important factor in the causation of disease ; and in all diseases alcoholics are bad patients. In epidemics the mortality among drinkers is excessive ; and the general power of resistance to disease, injury, and fatigue is diminished. . . . Alcoholism lessens the chance of life ; the English life-insurance companies found that the presumptive length of life of non-drinkers was about twice that of drinkers. . . . The close relationship of alcoholism and crime

is well known; and the statistics of Baer, Kurella, Gallavardin and Sichart show that from 25 to 85 per cent. of all malefactors are drunkards. The rate of suicide varies with the general rate of consumption of alcohol in different countries.

“The evil effects of alcoholism are evident in the drunkard's posterity. Epilepsy, insanity, idiocy and various forms of physioal, mental, and moral degeneracy are very disproportionately prevalent among the offsprings of alcoholics” (Jew. Enc. i. 333-334).

(2) “The effects of consumption of alcohol are almost all due to its action upon the nervous system. Thus the immediate sensation of well-being is due to the flushing of the skin, suppressing temporarily the sense of chill, and to the fact that the sensibility to minor pains and inconveniences becomes blunted; whilst with larger doses the diminution of the power of self-control and sense of personal responsibility gives rise to excitability. In the secondary stage the fineness of the senses (hearing, touch, taste and vision) is affected, and this gives rise to an inability to control bodily movements such as facial expression. In the advanced stage of drunkenness, the intellectual processes of judgement and control are suspended.” (Enc. Brit. 14th Edition, i. 540).

(3) “Alcohol is a poison for protoplasm, that is, for the soft plastic material which is the essential constituent of every one of the minute cells that make up living organisms, whether animal or vegetable. Its poisonous effect in very dilute solution is easily shown on lowly organisms.

“The nerve cells of the brain, the most highly organised and delicate of the tissues, very early show the effect of alcohol. Many of the best observers of their own mental processes, such as Helmholtz and Huxley, have expressed themselves strongly as to the harmful effect

of minute doses of alcohol on brain work. It would seem that the ‘stimulating’ effect is really due to the paralysis of the very highest nerve-centres, so that cheerfulness, wit, and recklessness have free play. Large numbers of psychometric experiments under conditions of the greatest accuracy prove that alcohol, in small dietetic doses, exercises a distinctly paralysing effect on the working of the brain. Some mental processes are quickened for a short time, and then a retarding effect shows itself, which is prolonged and much more than cancels the apparent beneficial result. . . .

“There is universal testimony as to the close relationship between excessive drinking and breaches of the moral law and the law of the State. This is a direct consequence of the paralysis of the higher faculties, intellectual and moral, and the resulting free play given to the lower inclinations” (Enc. Rel. Eth. i. 299—301).

As to the harm caused by gambling the following quotation would suffice :—

“The vicious tendency of gambling has never been called in question. Lord Beaconsfield spoke of it as ‘a vast engine of national demoralization.’ . . . In 12 years (1895-6 to 1906-7) there were 156 suicides or attempted suicides in England assigned to this cause, as well as 719 cases of theft or embezzlement and 442 bankruptcies. In view of these facts, it is not surprising that, in all civilized countries, gambling is subjected to definite legislative restraints. It is, as Herbert Spencer says, a kind of action by which pleasure is obtained at the cost of pain to another. The happiness of the winner implies the misery of the loser. This kind of action, therefore, is essentially anti-social; it sears the sympathies, cultivates a hard egoism, and so produces a general deterioration of character. It is a habit intrinsically savage. In an atmosphere of brotherhood no form of gambling could exist. But the immorality

221. Yes, that you may reflect upon this world and the next. And they ask thee concerning "the orphans. Say: 'Promotion of their welfare is an act of great goodness. And if you intermix with them, they are your brethren. And Allah knows the mischief-maker from the reformer. And if Allah had willed, He would have put you to hardship. Surely, Allah is Mighty and Wise.'²²⁷

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ قُلْ إِصْلَاحُهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْنَتَكُمْ إِنْ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

^a4 : 128 ; 89 : 18 ; 93 : 10 ; 107 : 3.

of gambling may be argued on higher grounds than a calculation of pleasure.

"(a) Every gambling transaction involves a transfer of property in one shape or another. When the gambler is asked why he stakes his money on a game or a race, his reply is, 'To add an interest to the game.' The interest thus added is, simply stated, the interest of acquisition. If the real object were, as is claimed, merely the sport and the excitement, then men might just as well wager counters, or, for the matter of that, agree to hand over all winnings to public charities. But this is not done. The transfer of property, in one shape or another, is essential to the act. There are only three ways in which property can be legitimately acquired—by gift, by labour, and by exchange. Gambling stands outside all of these.

"(b) Its motive is, however, carefully disguised covetousness. It is an attempt to get property without paying the price for it. It is a violation of the law of equivalents. It is a kind of robbery by mutual agreement; but it is still robbery, just as duelling, which is murder by mutual agreement, is still treated as murder. It is begotten of covetousness; it leads to idleness.

"(c) It is, moreover, an appeal to chance. If in any contest skill comes in, odds are given

or handicaps arranged so as to equalize the chances as far as possible. To make chance the arbiter of conduct is to subvert the moral order and stability of life.

"(d) It concentrates attention upon lucre, and thereby withdraws attention from worthier objects of life" (Enc. Rel. Eth. vi. pp. 165-166).

227. Important Words :

اليتامى (orphans) is the plural of يَتِيم which is derived from يَمُّ meaning, he fell short of a thing, feeling weak and tired; he lost his father in childhood. Thus يَتِيم is one whose father has died and who has not yet attained the age of puberty, which, according to Islamic jurisprudence, is 18 years. The word يَتِيم is also used about a thing which is without equal (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

تَخَالَطُوهُمْ (intermix with them) is derived from خَطَطَ. They say خَطَطَ الشَّيْءُ بِالشَّيْءِ i.e. he mixed up one thing with the other. خَالَطَهُ means, he mixed or mingled or associated with him; he mixed or joined with him in his affairs; he became co-partner with him. خَالَطَ قَلْبَهُ means, anxiety pervaded his heart (Aqrab & Lane).

أَعْنَتَكُمْ (put you to hardship) is derived from عَنَت which means, he fell into difficulty or hardship. أَعْنَتَهُ means, he put him to

hardship ; he burdened him with a task that was beyond his power (Aqrah).

Commentary :

The opening words of this verse apparently seem to be misplaced, for they are connected not with the following words of the verse in which they are placed, but with the concluding words of the previous one. The complete sentence, therefore, should read like this, "thus Allah makes His commandments clear to you that you may reflect upon this world and the next." If read like this, the clause would mean that God has refrained from issuing a definite commandment with regard to war expenditure and has simply ordered you to retain such portion of your possessions as you may require for your worldly needs and spend the balance in the cause of religion so that you may be trained to think over and judge the comparative value of this world and the next and act accordingly. The words, "upon this world and the next" have been separated from the preceding words to provide a pause with the object of impressing the importance of the matter on the mind of the listener or reader.

As Quranic verses follow a natural order—an order prompted and followed by the innermost nature of the addressee—this verse follows in the wake of the verses dealing with war. As the war leaves behind orphans, this verse lays down basic instructions as to how they should be treated and looked after. Muslims are told that the bringing-up of orphans is a very delicate affair and an important social duty. Orphans should be brought up in the manner most conducive to their greatest good i.e. their physical, moral and spiritual welfare. They should be treated as members of the family, and their property properly looked after and

steps taken to augment it. The words, *and if you intermix with them, they are your brethren*, signify not only permission but exhortation. The exhortation lies in the word "brethren" which is meant to point to Muslims to allow orphans to live as members of their family, this being not only wise and humane but also based on considerations of convenience. If orphans had been directed to be kept aloof and their property managed on a strictly legal basis, it would have in most cases entailed a good deal of unnecessary inconvenience and trouble for both parties concerned.

The words, *Allah knows the mischief-maker from the reformer*, serve as a stern warning to the guardians of orphans. Anything they do is sure to come to the knowledge of God. Nay, God knows even the hidden things of the human heart. So they should beware of playing the part of mischief-makers in the garb of reformers.

God's attributes of "Powerful" and "Wise" placed at the end of the verse contain a general admonition to guardians of orphans to be very careful about their dealings with them. They should not delude themselves with the idea that, being weak and not yet possessed of proper understanding, the orphans are entirely at their mercy and that they can treat them as they like. For, if orphans are not strong and wise, God certainly is, and He would call them to account if they behaved unkindly or dishonestly towards these helpless and friendless creatures of His. By mentioning God's attributes of "Powerful" and "Wise" the Quran also means to exhort Muslims to look after orphans in such a way and give them such good education and training as should help them to grow strong and wise and become useful members of the community.

222. And "marry not idolatrous women until they believe; even a believing bondwoman is better than an idolatress, although she may *highly* please you. And give not *believing women* in marriage to idolaters until they believe; even a believing slave is better than an idolater, although he may *highly* please you. These call to the Fire, but Allah calls to Heaven and to forgiveness by His command. And He makes His Signs clear to the people that they may remember.²²⁸

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَةَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَ وَلَا مَةَ مُؤْمِنَةً
خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ
حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ
أَعْجَبَكُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو
إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْغَفْرِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾

60 : 11.

228. Important Words :

تَنْكِحُوا *tankihū* (marry) and تَنْكِحُوا *tunkihū* (give in marriage) are both derived from نَكَحَ. They say نَكَحَ الْمَطْرَ الْأَرْضَ i.e. the rain fell on the earth and became mixed with the soil. نَكَحَ امْرَأَةً means, he married a woman. نَكَحَ زَوْجَتَهُ means, he went in unto his wife. نَكَحَ الْمَرْأَةَ امْرَأَةً means, the woman married a man. نَكَحَ الْمَرْأَةَ زَيْدًا means, he gave the woman in marriage to Zaid. Thus نَكَحَ means, both (1) marriage and (2) coition with one's wife. The Quran itself uses the word in the latter sense in 2 : 231 (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

مُشْرِكٌ (an idolater) is derived from شَرَكَ. They say شَرَكَهُ فِيهِ meaning, he shared the thing with him; he became his co-partner in it. شَرَكَهُ فِي الْأَمْرِ means, he made him his co-partner in the affair. شَرَكَهُ إِلَهُ means, he attributed to, or set up with, him a co-partner. شَرِيكَ means, a sharer, or a co-partner, or an associate, or a colleague. Thus مُشْرِكٌ means, one who attributes to, or sets up with, God a co-partner or co-partners, allotting to the latter all or some of the attributes of the former. شَرَكَ means, attributing to, or setting up with, God co-partners; idolatry (Lane). شَرَكَ is of two kinds : شَرَكَ عَظِيمٌ

(the greater idolatry) signifying belief in a person or thing as being co-partner with God, and شَرَكَ صَغِيرٌ (the lesser idolatry) i.e. ascribing to some person or thing any of the attributes of God without looking upon him or it as His co-partner (Mufradāt). Other relevant terms are شَرَكَ جَلِيٌّ i.e. manifest idolatry, and شَرَكَ خَفِيٌّ i.e. hidden idolatry; and شَرَكَ فِي الْأَلْهَاءِ i.e. believing one to be a co-partner with God in His person, and شَرَكَ فِي الصِّفَاتِ i.e. ascribing any of the attributes of God to some one. The term مُشْرِكِينَ (idolaters) is generally confined to such peoples as set up co-partners with God and do not believe in any revealed Book.

Commentary :

The question of marriage with "idolatrous women" is intimately connected with the subject of war, for it is during war that Muslims, being away from their homes for a considerable time, are liable to be tempted to contract marriages with such women. This the Quran strictly disallows in the verse under comment, which also forbids the giving of believing women in marriage to idolatrous men. The prohibition is based on religious as well as on moral and social grounds. An idolatrous husband

- R. 28 223. And they ask thee concerning menstruation. Say. 'It is a harmful thing, so keep away from women during menstruation, and go not in unto them until they are clean. But when they have cleansed themselves, go in unto them as Allah has commanded you. Allah loves those who turn to Him and loves those who keep themselves clean.'²²⁹

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى لَا فَاعْتَرِلُوا
النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّى يَطْهَرْنَ
فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

is bound to exercise an extremely baneful influence not only on his wife but on his children as well; whereas an idolatrous wife is sure to ruin the early training of the offspring. Moreover, when a believing man has an idolatrous wife or *vice versa*, their ideas, beliefs, culture and outlook on life being widely different, there cannot possibly be harmony or concord between the two and their life is sure to become miserable, if they possess any attachment whatever for their religion. Again *Islam* (submission to one God) and *shirk* (setting up co-partners with God) being poles apart, there can be no real contact or permanent intermixing between the two. In this connection, it may be noted that *Islam* allows, though it certainly does not encourage, the marriage of a Muslim with a woman belonging to the People of the Book who are decidedly nearer to *Islam* (5:6). But of this we will speak when we come to the relevant verses.

The words, *until they believe*, appear to be redundant at first sight; for, if marriage with an idolatrous person is prohibited, it is evident that this prohibition will automatically cease to operate when an idolatrous person is converted to *Islam*. On deeper thought, however, the words, *until they believe*, prove to be most rightly placed. They have indeed been used to remind Muslims of their duty pertaining to the conversion of idolatrous people to *Islam*. The words also contain a veiled prophecy that

the time was fast coming when idolatry would become extinct in Arabia.

The expression *بِأَمْرِ* (by His command) when used with regard to a certain action of God signifies, according to the Quranic idiom, that God has provided or intends to provide extraordinary means for the accomplishment of the thing aimed at. So is the case here, the clause signifying that Allah's call to Heaven and to forgiveness is not an empty announcement but that He has made special arrangements to bring about the desired end. It is further interesting to note that the word *مَغْفِرَةً* and *جَنَّةً* both convey the sense of covering up a thing, the idea being that God's favours and His forgiveness will be so liberal and so generous as to cover or overwhelm believers.

229. Important Words :

حَاضٍ (menstruation) is derived from *حَاضَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ*. They say *حَاضَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ* i.e. the woman menstruated; blood came forth from her womb or uterus at the known time and in the known manner. Thus *مَحِيضٌ* means, (1) menstruation i.e. the monthly course; (2) time of menstruation; (3) place of menstruation (Lane & Mufradāt). According to some, the word *حَوْضٌ* which means a tank or a place where water collects, is also derived from the same root though the central letter of the root is different (Lane).

أَذًى (harmful thing) is the infinitive-noun from *أَذَى* meaning, he came to harm, or he was

224. Your wives are a tilth for you ; so approach your tilth when and how you like and send ahead *some good* for yourselves ; and fear Allah and know that you shall meet Him ; and bear good tidings to those who obey.²³⁰

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأَتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدْ مَوْلَا أَنْفُسِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلْقَوُونَ
وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

annoyed. اذى means, he or it caused a harm. اذى means, a harmful thing ; a disagreeable thing ; an annoyance ; a hurt ; a thing held to be unclean or filthy ; a slight evil less than what is termed ضرر (Tāj).

اعتزلوا (keep away from) is derived from عزل. عزله عنه means, he removed him or it from that (Aqrab). اعتزل الشيء or اعتزل عنه means, he kept away from the thing (Aqrab).

يطهرون (they are clean) and تطهرون (they have cleansed themselves) and المتطهرين (who keep themselves clean) are all derived from طهر which means, he or it became clean or free from dirt or filth, etc.; or he or it became pure. طهرت المرأة means, the woman became clean from the menstrual discharge i.e. her flow of menses stopped. تطهرت المرأة means, she became cleansed or purified by washing herself. ايطهر (ittahara) is like تطهر giving the same meaning i.e. he became cleansed or he kept himself clean (Aqrab).

Commentary :

After laying down, in brief, the law about intermarriage, reference to marital relations and conjugal obligations became necessary. The verse under comment indicates that coition or sexual intercourse with one's wife is not permissible during menses, for such intercourse would be harmful for both parties. Coition becomes permissible when menses cease, but as a further precaution the husband should wait till the wife has washed herself by taking a bath.

The command referred to in the words, *go in unto them as Allah has commanded you*, is

contained in, and seek what Allah has ordained for you (2 : 188), hinting that coition with one's wife should be in a manner productive of issue. A further hint to the above is contained in the following verse.

The words, *and go not in unto them* (lit. do not go near them) *until they are clean*, do not mean that the husband should keep away from his wife completely and in no case go near her. The Holy Prophet's sayings as well as his practice belie that inference. The expression simply refers to coition and does not debar other forms of loving approach.

The concluding word ملطهرون i.e. those who keep themselves clean, has been put in the masculine gender, because *firstly* the use of the masculine gender generally includes and extends to females as well ; and *secondly* because by using this word the Quran means to hint that if men go in unto their wives while they are unclean, they are sure to make themselves unclean too. *Thirdly* this word also hints that though it becomes lawful for a man to go in unto his wife after the monthly flow has ceased, yet it is better for him to wait till the woman has properly washed herself, for God loves those who are more careful about cleanliness.

230. Important Words :

حرث (tilth). See 2 : 206.

اننى (how and when) means : (1) how ; (2) when ; and (3) where (Aqrab).

قدموا (send ahead) is derived from قدم meaning, he came or stepped forward. قدم (qaddama)

means, he sent forward or sent ahead; he put forward; he offered. قدم لنفسه means, he did good or evil that will in future bear good or bad fruit for himself. قدمه على غيره means, he preferred him to others. قدم له الثمن means, he paid him the price in advance (Aqrab). The Quran uses this expression to point out that whatever good or evil deed a man does, serves like a seed to bear a future crop. No action is ever lost.

آمن (those who obey) is derived from آمن meaning: (1) he believed; (2) he obeyed (Aqrab). Here it gives the latter meaning. For a fuller discussion of this word see 2:4.

Commentary:

This verse constitutes an eloquent testimony to the inimitably pure and dignified language of the Quran. An extremely delicate subject has been dealt with in a most decent and discreet manner, and the whole philosophy of marriage and conjugal relations has been given in one brief sentence *i.e.* *Your wives are a tilth for you.* A woman is indeed like a tilth in which the seed of progeny is sown. The expression has a twofold significance depending on the meaning of the words اتوا حرائكم (approach your tilth). If approaching the tilth means coition, then the expression, *approach your tilth how you like*, would signify that: (1) you should go in unto your wife in a manner suited to her capacity as a tilth and in no other manner; and (2) that both of you should try to keep your hearts pure at the time of coition so that the issue of the process may also share that purity. Says the Holy Prophet, "When the husband goes in unto his wife, they should both pray to God saying, 'Our Lord, keep both of us away from Satan; and if Thou grant us an issue, keep that also away from him'" (Muslim, *Kitāb al-Nikāh*).

On the contrary, if "approaching the tilth" means selecting and dealing with the wife, the expression, *approach your tilth how you like*,

would mean: (1) That you should select a wife who is best suited as a tilth, *i.e.* (a) she should be ولد, *viz.* capable of producing children and not barren; (b) she should be healthy, capable of producing healthy children; (c) she should be well qualified to give good training to the children; and (d) she should be دود, *i.e.* of loving nature so that there may reign an atmosphere of love and harmony in the house and the children may benefit by it. (2) That you should look after and treat your wife well so that her life may be happy and contented and she may become best disposed to bring up the children well. (3) That you should keep yourselves also in a state of good physical and moral health so that your seed for your tilth may also be healthy in every respect.

A wise husbandman selects the best soil, prepares the best tilth, secures the best seed, and chooses the best time and manner of sowing it. So should you, for on the harvest which you are to reap in the form of children depends not only your own but also your community's entire future. It is to this supreme fact that the clause, *and send ahead some good for yourselves*, so pointedly refers. In short, the likening of woman to tilth throws a flood of light on the morality of eugenics and sex. But the real basis of all happiness and progress is the fear of God and in the words, *fear Allah and know that you shall meet Him*, the Quran warns the Faithful never to lose sight of the real object of marriage even in the heat of carnal passions; for even the seat of these passions is the source of the procreation of children and the continuation of a good race on the earth. Finally, the clause, *and bear glad tidings to those who obey*, contains a mighty بشارة (good news) for those who may obey this injunction, for it would not only make their own lives supremely happy but would also secure for them the best progeny for all time.

225. And make not Allah a target for your oaths that you may *thereby* abstain from doing good and acting righteously and making peace between men. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.²³¹

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا
وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

226. "Allah will not call you to account for such of your oaths as are vain, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing."²³²

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ
بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

90 : 55

231. Important Words :

عرضة (target) is derived from عرض. They say عرض الشيء meaning, he exhibited or offered the thing; he placed it before or in sight of the people. عرض لي عارض means, a hindrance came across my way. Thus عرضة means: (1) an obstacle or hindrance in the way of a person; (2) a thing or person exposed to or confronting someone or something; (3) a butt or target like the butt of archers; also figuratively, as one might say, "he became the عرضة or butt of their rebukes"; (4) an object; (5) an excuse or pretext (Aqrab & Tāj).

إيمان (oaths) is the plural of يمين which is derived from يمن. They say يمن الرجل meaning, he approached him from the right hand side. يمن الله فلانا means, God made him blessed. يمين means, (1) the right hand side; (2) the right hand; (3) strength, blessing and good fortune; (4) an oath (Aqrab).

Commentary :

As there are men to be found who are likely to forget that a wife being a sacred tilth is to be treated well not only for her own sake but also for the sake of children, and such men flare up at slight causes and then resort to swearing that they would not treat their wives well nor act kindly towards their relations, the Quran here makes a suitable reference to such men

and prohibits them from using the name of God for acts of injustice and transgression. The verse under comment and the one that follows serve as a sort of introduction to verse 2 : 227 in which the subject of swearing to keep away from one's wife has been more pointedly stated. God's name, being the holiest of all holy things, should not be used as an obstacle in the way of righteousness and of doing good to others.

The word عرضة meaning a butt or an obstacle, has been very appropriately used in the verse to point out that such men as swear by God to abstain from acts of righteousness hopelessly fail to appreciate the true dignity of the Supreme Being. It is indeed an act of blasphemy that one should use the name of Allah, Who is the fountain-head of all goodness, to keep away from the path of goodness. Again, it is a gross violation of the sanctity of Allah's name that it should be used as a butt or target for profane or purposeless oaths.

232. Important Words :

يؤاخذكم (will call you to account) is derived from أخذ. أخذ means, he took hold of him; he seized him. آخذ means, he called him to account; he punished or chastised him (Aqrab).

227. For those who vow *abstinence* from their wives, the *maximum* period of waiting is four months ; then if they go back from the vow, surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.²³³

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرْتُّصُ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ
فَإِنْ فَاءُ ذُو فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

لغو (vain) is derived from لغا. They say. لغا بـكلمة i.e. he uttered or spoke a word. لغا الشيء means, the thing went in vain. لغا عن الطريق means, he deviated from the path. لغا في قوله means, he spoke without proper care and thinking. لغو therefore means, a speech or writing, etc. which is worthless and of no account and deserves no attention ; it also means, the barking of a dog (Aqrah). لغا means, he jested or joked with him (Lane). لغو also means that which one utters without seriously meaning it (Muhit).

حليم (Forbearing) is derived from حلم meaning, he was forbearing and clement ; he forgave and connived at offences ; he controlled his temper in moments of anger ; he was patient, sedate, or intelligent and calm and was not hasty in punishing or taking revenge. Thus حليم which is one of the attributive names of God, means, one who is forbearing and clement, to whom the disobedience of the disobedient does not cause agitation or excitement, who is slow in punishing but quick in forgiving ; it also means one who is intelligent (Aqrah, Lane & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

Oaths are very serious things, as mentioned in the preceding verse, but some men are in the habit of swearing without meaning anything. Such oaths as are referred to in this verse are oaths taken carelessly or as a matter of habit or those taken in a sudden fit of anger. The fact that such oaths are not liable to be punished does not, however, mean that indulgence in them is permitted. It only means that a person who swears vain oaths will not be punished on the basis of such oaths, i.e., these

oaths will not be legally treated as oaths. But he will certainly suffer the consequences of indulging in vain and useless talk. A Muslim is expected to avoid all things that are vain or purposeless and the Quran clearly enjoins it (23 : 4).

The clause, *He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned*, means that a person will have to answer for oaths he takes consciously and deliberately. The words, *what your hearts have earned*, also hint that God does not call a man to account for such passing thoughts as may flash across the mind and then disappear. Only such thoughts are punishable as are "earned" by the heart, i.e., cherished and retained by the mind.

The words, *Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing*, signify that as Allah knows your weaknesses, He treats you with forbearance, and does not call you to account for such of your acts as you might do without meaning them.

233. Important Words :

أول (vow) is derived from the root ألى meaning, he fell short ; or he fell short of doing what he ought to have done ; or he was remiss. ألى means, he swore. ألت على الشيء means, I swore to do the thing. ألت لا أفعل كذا means, I swore that I would not do such a thing. ألى من زوجه شهرا means, he swore he would not go near his wife (i.e. not go in unto her) for a month. ألتل also gives the same meaning as ألى i.e. he swore, as in 24 : 23. ألام means, an oath or the act of swearing ; and technically it means, a vow taken by a husband not to go near his wife (Aqrah & Lane).

228. And if they decide upon "divorce, then surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."²³⁴

وَأِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٤﴾

^a2 : 230 ; 33 : 50 ; 65 : 2, 3.

تربص (waiting) is derived from ربص. They say ربص ربص i.e. he waited for a good or an evil to befall him. تربص means, he waited or he awaited, or he tarried waiting. تربص من الامر means, he remained waiting and did not do the thing, i.e., he abstained from doing it (Aqrab).

Commentary :

After the two introductory and intervening verses in which the subject of taking oaths has been dealt with, the Quran now reverts to the original subject of conjugal relations. The verse under comment speaks of those men who vow abstinence from their wives without actually divorcing them. It is, in this connection, interesting to note that while approaching the subject of divorce, dealt with in the succeeding verses, the Quran first speaks of menstruation (2 : 223) which is a sort of temporary and partial, though unreal, separation. Then (as in the present verse) it speaks of real though indefinite separation. And then, as in the succeeding verses, it speaks of real though revocable divorce. And finally (2 : 231) it speaks of irrevocable divorce. A really wonderful order designed to put as many obstacles as possible in the way of divorce which Islam recognizes and retains as a sort of necessary evil.

As clearly stated in the verse under comment, Islam allows four months at the most to a person who swears not to approach his wife. During this period, he must either get reconciled to his wife and restore conjugal relations, or separation will be effected between the two. Islam would in no case permit indefinite separation without divorce, leaving the woman "suspended" as it were.

The words, *if they go back from the vow, surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful*, indicate that swearing abstinence from wife is reprehensible in the sight of God Who loves to see reconciliation between husband and wife. The verse thus abolishes the custom of ايلام which was prevalent among the Arabs before the advent of Islam and by which it was sought to deprive women of their conjugal rights for long and indefinite periods.

234. Important Words :

الطلاق (divorce) is derived from طلق. They say طلقت الناقة i.e. the she-camel became loosened and free from the rope which tied her. طلقت المرأة من زوجها means, the woman left her husband and severed her connection with him. طلق المرأة زوجها means, the husband divorced his wife. الطلاق therefore, means, breaking of the tie of marriage ; divorce (Aqrab).

عزموا (they decide). عزم means, he made up his mind ; he decided ; he was determined to do a thing (Aqrab).

Commentary :

If, after vowing abstinence from his wife, as stated in the preceding verse, the husband decides on divorce, he is free to take that course. But the words, *Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing*, warn him that if he is thereby acting unjustly to his wife, he should not think that he can so act with impunity, for Allah is there to hear the supplications of the wife ; and even if she does not or cannot pray to God, Allah knows everything.

With this verse begins a discussion of the Islamic law of divorce. According to this law, the husband possesses the right to divorce

229. And "the divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three courses; and it is not lawful for them that they conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day; and their husbands have the greater right to take them back during that period, provided they desire reconciliation. And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but men have a rank above them. And Allah is Mighty and Wise."²³⁵

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنْنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبَعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٥﴾

"2 : 235 ; 65 : 5. b4 : 35

his wife, when legitimate necessity arises. But this right is to be exercised only on rare occasions and in exceptional circumstances.

235. Important Words :

قرء (courses) is the plural of قرء which is derived from قرأ. They say قرأ الشيء i.e. he collected or put together the thing. قرأت means, the she-camel became pregnant. قرأت الحامل means, the pregnant woman gave birth to a child. اقرأت المرأة or قرأت المرأة means, the woman became pure from menstrual discharge. اقرأت المرأة also means, she menstruated, thus giving contrary meanings. قرء (Qur'un) or قرء (Qar'un) means : (1) a time, and this is the primary significance of the word, as we say هبت الريح لقرئها i.e. the wind blew at its fixed time ; (2) menstruation ; (3) period or state of purity preceding and following a menstrual discharge i.e. the period between two menstruations ; thus the word gives contrary meanings ; (4) termination of a menstruation (Aqrab & Lane). The word قرء is also sometimes applied to the period of menstruation and that of purity taken together i.e. the whole month (Muhīt). According to Rāghib قرء means the time or state when a

woman leaves her state of purity and enters that of menstruation (Mufradāt).

رحم (wombs) is the plural of رحم (rihm) or رحم (rahim) which is from the verb رحم. They say رحمه i.e. he showed him mercy, he was tender towards him. رَحِمَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ means, the woman had complaint of the womb after childbirth. رحم (rahim) or رحم (rihm) means, (1) womb ; (2) relationship, particularly by the female side. The expression ذوراء الارحام or اولاء الارحام means, relatives or kinsmen. In Muslim jurisprudence the expression signifies such relations as are not direct heirs (Lane).

بعول (husbands), like بعول, is the plural of بعل. They say بعل الرجل i.e. the man became a husband. بعلت المرأة means, the woman married and had a husband. بعل is like زوج meaning, both a husband and a wife i.e. a partner in life ; but the significance of husband is more common. The word also means, lord, master or owner of a thing ; or a person in authority. The Arabs sometimes gave the name بعل to their idols also (Lane & Mufradāt).

المعروف (equity) is a common Arabic word which has been freely used in the Quran as well

as the Hadith. The word is derived from عرف. They say عرفه *i.e.* he knew it either by means of the five senses or by mental perception, as by reflection, or by consideration of the effect of a thing on the mind; he recognized it. المعروف means, (1) a known or commonly known thing; (2) an action or thing the goodness of which is known by reason *i.e.* equity; (3) an action or thing the goodness of which is known by the law of *Shari'at*; (4) goodness, kindness and beneficence; (5) liberality coupled with moderation; (6) good fellowship with one's family and others; (7) sincere and honest word of advice, etc. (Lane). It may be noted here that while taking the oath of allegiance from would-be Muslims, the Holy Prophet always used the word المعروف asking them to solemnly affirm that they would obey him in all معروف things *i.e.* not only in such things as formed part of the divine law of *Shari'at* but also in those which the Prophet held to be good by his own reason.

درجة (rank) means, (1) the various steps forming a set of stairs; (2) rank; (3) eminence; (4) degree (Aqrab).

Commentary :

In view of the fact that divorce is the most hateful of all lawful things in the sight of God (Dāwūd), it has been hedged round by many checks and limitations. One of these checks is that a husband can divorce his wife only when she is clean *i.e.* in a state of purity, and he has had no sexual knowledge of her in her period of purity. After the pronouncement of divorce the wife must wait for three menstruations *i.e.* about three months, which period is called عدة (*iddat*) or the period of waiting. This is another check, because this period of waiting gives to the husband sufficient time to consider the pros and cons of his action and to allow his love for her, if there is yet a dormant spark lying smouldering somewhere, to reassert itself. The third check laid down in this verse is that a divorced woman, if pregnant, must

not conceal this fact from her husband, for the expected birth of a child is calculated to go a long way in bringing about reconciliation between the couple. The fourth check, as mentioned in the succeeding verses, is that for complete and irrevocable separation there should be three divorces. After the pronouncement of the first as well as the second divorce, and before the expiry of the period of waiting, the husband enjoys the privilege of taking his wife back, if he so desires. Even after the period of waiting is over, the couple can become reunited in the case of the first and second divorce by renewing the marriage tie.

The verse adds that as far as personal rights are concerned, the husband and the wife stand on a par, but in matters relating to discipline, the husband has superiority over the wife, *i.e.*, in case of difference the final authority is vested in him. The reasons for this are given in 4:35.

The divine attribute *Mighty* added at the end of the verse contains a reminder and a warning to the husband that he must not misuse the authority he has been given in household affairs, for there is the Almighty God over his head to Whom he is responsible for his actions. The attribute also provides a reason for vesting authority in the husband, who is the stronger of the parties. The attribute *Wise* brings home to the husband the fact that the vesting of the final authority in him is based on just and wise considerations, because wherever two or more persons live together, it is necessary that the wisest among them be appointed the *Amīr* or the chief for the efficient running of their affairs and the uniformity of their actions.

A word here about the significance of فرم seems essential. As explained under Important Words, this word gives two distinct and contrary meanings, *i.e.*, (1) menstruation; and (2) the period of purity between two menstruations. This has given rise to much difference

- 29 230. Such "divorce may be pronounced twice; then, ^beither retain them in a becoming manner or send them away with kindness. And it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you have given them (your wives) unless both fear that they cannot observe the limits prescribed by Allah. But, if you fear that they cannot observe the limits prescribed by Allah, then it shall be no sin for either of them in what she gives to get her freedom. These are the limits prescribed by Allah, so transgress them not; and whoso transgresses the limits prescribed by Allah, it is they that are the wrongdoers.²³⁶

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَيْنِ فَاَمْسَاكِمْ بَعْرُوفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِجْ بِاِحْسَانٍ
وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَاْخُذُوْا مِمَّا اَتَيْتُوْهُنَّ شَيْئًا اِلَّا
اَنْ يَخَافَا اِلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اِلَّا يُقِيْمَا
حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهٖ تِلْكَ
حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَتَعَدَّوْهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٣٠﴾

^aSee 2 : 228. ^b2 : 232 ; 4 : 130 ; 65 : 3.

of opinion among scholars of Muslim jurisprudence; Abū Bakr and 'Umar among the Companions of the Holy Prophet and Abū Ḥanīfa and Ahmad bin Ḥanbal among the *Imāms* of jurisprudence have held the view that by using the word *قَرء* the Quran means menstruation and not the period of purity. On the contrary, 'Ā'isha (wife of the Holy Prophet) and Ibn 'Umar among the Companions, and Mālik and Shāfi'i among the *Imāms* of jurisprudence have held the opposite view (*Muḥit*). Opinions being so balanced, it would be open to a Muslim to take either of the two views, but a collective survey of relevant arguments, which need not be stated here, leads one to the conclusion that the first-mentioned view is perhaps the more reasonable of the two. If, however, one should desire to be on the perfectly safe side, it is open to him to take the word *قَرء* to signify the periods of menstruation and purity taken together i.e. the whole month.

236. Important Words :

امسك (retain) is derived from *امسك* which is

again derived from *امسك*. They say *امسك به* i.e. he stuck to it. *امسك* is both transitive and intransitive. *امسكه* means, he got hold of it and stopped and retained it. *امسك عن الكلام* means, he abstained from talking. *امسك* means, (1) to hold or stop or prevent or retain; (2) to refrain or abstain (Aqrab).

تسريح (send away) is the noun-infinitive from *سرح* (*sarrah*) which is derived from *سرح*. They say *سرح المواشي* i.e. the cattle went forth for grazing. *سرح السيل* means, the flood moved on leisurely. *سرحه* means, he sent him away. *سرح فلان زوجته* means, he sent away or divorced his wife (Aqrab).

حدود (limits) is the plural of *حد* i.e. a limit. *حده* means, he put a limit to it. *حدا الشئ عن الشئ* means, he distinguished one thing from the other. *الحد* means, (1) the limit or the line where two things meet; (2) last limit or extremity of a thing; (3) that by which a thing may be defined; (4) prescribed punishment for an offence. *حدود الله* means God's religious commandments (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse contains the fifth check on divorce. A man who seeks permanent and irrevocable separation from his wife must pronounce divorce on three separate occasions, each in a separate طهر *i.e.* period of purity, when the woman is clean and the man has not gone in unto her during that period of purity. The pronouncement of divorce twice or thrice at one and the same time is not permissible as the verse hints in the word مرتان (twice) which signifies a thing happening on two separate occasions and not two things happening at one and the same time. The Holy Prophet treated such collective pronouncements, whatever their number, as only one divorce (Tirmidhi & Dāwūd). According to Nasa'i, the Holy Prophet was extremely angry when one day he was told that a person had made all the three pronouncements of divorce at one and the same time, and said: "Is the Book of God going to be made a plaything while I am yet among you?"

After the pronouncement of the first two divorces, the husband can take back the divorced wife within 'iddat *i.e.* the period of waiting, with or without her consent; but after the period of waiting is over, he can take her back only with her consent and that after remarrying her. After the pronouncement of the third divorce, however, the husband forfeits this right and the couple are finally separated. A Companion of the Holy Prophet once asked him saying, "The Quran has here spoken of two divorces only, whence comes in the third?" The Prophet referred him to the Quranic words ار تريح باحسان *i.e.* or send them away with kindness meaning thereby that after the pronouncement of the first two divorces the husband was free to retain his wife if he so desired; but if he wanted irrevocable separation, he should "send her away" *i.e.* divorce her a third time (Jarir & Musnad). The point is further

made clear in the succeeding verse. Thus the word تريح here signifies طلاق *i.e.* divorce.

The present verse also makes it clear that when a person divorces his wife, he forfeits مهر *i.e.* the dower-money he has given her; and if at the time of divorce he has not yet given her the dower-money agreed on by the parties, he must make the payment before the divorce becomes effective. Again, he is not allowed to take back anything he might have given her in the form of gifts and presents as the clause, *it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you have given them*, indicates.

If, however, it is the wife who demands separation, technically known as خلع (*Khul'a* lit. the putting off of clothes etc., or the shedding of old leaves), she must get it through a Qāḍī or judge as the word ختم (you fear), which has been put in the plural number, hints. In this case she has to part with, in full or in part, her dowry as well as the gifts she might have received from her husband, as agreed on by the parties or decided by the judge. The case of Jamila, wife of Qais bin Thābit, provides a good illustration of the exercise of the right of *Khul'a* by women. She demanded separation from her husband, Qais, on the ground that she did not like him, *i.e.*, their temperaments being different she could not get on with him. She was granted *Khul'a* by the Holy Prophet, but she had to return to her husband the orchard he had given her (Bukhārī). This right, however, is not to be exercised in a light-hearted manner. The Holy Prophet has condemned the action of a woman who demands separation from her husband without valid reason even as he has condemned the action of a man who divorces his wife without genuine cause. He is reported to have said, "A woman who seeks separation from her husband without a legitimate cause shall be deprived of the fragrance of Heaven" (Dāwūd & Tirmidhi). This is what is hinted in the concluding words,

231. And if he divorce her *the third time*, then she is not lawful for him thereafter, until she marries another husband; and, if he *also* divorce her, then it shall be no sin for them to return to each other, provided they are sure that they would be able to observe the limits prescribed by Allah. And these are the limits prescribed by Allah which He makes clear to the people who have knowledge.²³⁷

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا
غَيْرَهُ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا
إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ
يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣١﴾

these are the limits prescribed by Allah, so transgress them not, etc. The husband and the wife are both warned to fear God and refrain from transgressing the limits imposed by God for their own good.

237. Important Words :

يَتَرَاجَعَا (return to each other) is derived from رَجَعَ i.e. he returned; the word is used to indicate the coming together of people after their dispersal or separation, as they say رَاجِعِ الْقَوْمِ i.e. the people returned to the place from where they separated or left (Aqrab).

يُقِيمَا (observe) is derived from أَقَامَ which means, he made a thing stand upright; he observed or duly performed a religious commandment or duty, etc. (Lane). See also under 2: 4.

تَنْكِحَ (she marries) is derived from نَكَحَ. They say نَكَحَ or نَكَحَتْ meaning (1) he or she married a spouse; (2) he or she had sexual intercourse with his or her spouse. In the present verse the word is used in the latter sense. See also 2: 222.

Commentary :

This verse refers to the third and final pronouncement of divorce after which the husband loses all right of reunion with his wife unless the divorced woman marries another man and establishes conjugal relations with him, and is then formally divorced by him or he dies, leaving her free to marry another man. By the inclusion of this provision in the law of divorce, Islam has, on the one hand, enhanced the sanctity of the marriage tie which must not be trifled with and has declared unlawful the evil practice of *halāla* (حَلَالَة); and, on the other, it has afforded yet another opportunity to the couple who once had lived as husband and wife to become reunited if they so desired. The practice of *halāla* referred to above consists in a divorced woman marrying a man, other than her former husband, with the object of obtaining divorce from him and thereby making herself lawful for the former husband. Islam condemns this practice as a thing accursed (Tirmidhi ch. on *Nikāh*) and enjoins that marriage with and divorce from another husband must both be genuine.

232. And when you divorce your wives and "they approach the end of their appointed period, then "either retain them in a becoming manner or send them away in a becoming manner ; but retain them not wrongfully so that you may transgress. And whoso does that, surely wrongs his own soul. And do not make a jest of the commandments of Allah, and "remember the favour of Allah upon you and the Book and the Wisdom which He has sent down to you, whereby He exhorts you. And fear Allah and know that Allah knows all things well.²³⁸

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَعْنِ أَجَلُهُنَّ فَامْسِكُوهُنَّ
بِعُرْوَةٍ أَوْ سَرِحِينَ بِعُرْوَةٍ وَلَا تُنْسِكُوهُنَّ
ضَرَارًا لِتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ
وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ
بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝

^a2 : 229 ; 65 : 5. ^bSee 2 : 230.. ^c3 : 104.

238. Important Words :

بلغن (they approach) is from بلغ which means, he reached or came to or attained ; or he was near to reaching or attaining (Lane).

اجل (period) is the noun-infinitive from the verb اجل meaning, he or it delayed or fell short. اجل الشيء means, he appointed a time or period for the thing. اجل therefore means, the term or period appointed or specified for a thing ; also the end of such period. Death is called اجل because for every life there is an appointed time when it must come to an end (Aqrab & Lane).

يعظكم (exhorts you). يعظ is derived from عظم meaning, he gave him good advice ; he exhorted him ; he admonished him ; he warned him of the consequences of his actions and called him to a life of righteousness (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The verse contains a general injunction about the treatment of divorced women.

As is apparent from the context, the divorce spoken of here refers to the revocable divorce. After such divorce has been pronounced, there are only two courses open to the husband. He may either retain his wife and treat her with kindness or he may part with her in a good and becoming manner. He is not allowed to maltreat her and keep her in a state of suspense. The concluding part of the verse warns the husband against making light of the commandments of Allah relating to the rights of women, adding that, God being All-Knowing, even the hidden intentions and secret machinations of man are known to Him.

3. 30 233. And when you divorce women and they reach the end of their period, prevent them not from marrying their husbands, if they agree between themselves in a decent manner. This is an admonition for him among you who believes in Allah and the Last Day. It is more blessed for you and purer; and Allah knows but you do not know.²³⁹

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَعْلَوْهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضُوا بَيْنَهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ذَلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَُمْ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ
لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

239. Important Words :

عُضِّلُوهُنَّ (prevent them) is derived from *عَضَلَ*. They say *عَضَّلَهَا* i.e. he prevented or debarred her from marrying. The primary signification of *عَضَلَ* is the act of straitening or preventing, or withholding or debarring. *عَضَلَ عَلَيْهِ* means, he straitened him in his affairs and intervened as an obstacle between him and that which he desired (Tāj).

تَرَاضُوا (agree between themselves) is derived from *رَضِيَ* i.e. he was pleased, or he was satisfied, or he agreed. *تَرَاضَى الْقَوْمُ* means, the people agreed between themselves, or they came to a mutual agreement (Aqrab).

أَزْكَى (more blessed) is derived from *زَكَى* which means, it increased or augmented; it received blessing from God; it was or became pure. *أَزْكَى* means, more blessed, containing greater benefits, conducive to more good (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The word "husbands" mentioned in this verse may refer either to former husbands or to prospective ones. In the former case, the clause, *and when you divorce women*, would be taken as referring to the first or second

pronouncement of divorce. Sometimes, when a husband desires to take back his wife before pronouncing the third or irrevocable divorce, her offended relatives do not like her to go back to him again and therefore try to prevent her from remarrying him. The verse condemns that practice. In case the word "husbands" stands for prospective husbands, the above phrase would refer to the third or final divorce. Some men, even after the complete dissolution of their marriage, do not like the idea that their divorced wives should marry other persons and try to prevent them from contracting new marriages. This practice is also condemned in the clause, *prevent them not from marrying their (prospective) husbands*. Should the guardian of a divorced woman prevent her from remarrying her former husband or should the former husband prevent her from marrying a new husband, she can do so with the permission of the *Qāḍī* or the judge. The verse under comment also implies a repudiation of the evil practice of pronouncing three divorces at one and the same time, because had it been permissible, the question of divorced women remarrying their former husbands would have been meaningless.

234. And "mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years ; *this is* for those who desire to complete the suckling. And the man to whom the child belongs shall be responsible for their (the mothers') food and clothing according to usage. "No soul is burdened beyond its capacity. The mother shall not make *the father* suffer on account of her child, nor shall he to whom the child belongs make *the mother* suffer on account of his child, and the same is incumbent on the heir. If they both decide upon weaning *the child* by mutual consent and consultation, there is no blame on them. And if you desire to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there shall be no blame on you, provided you pay what you have agreed to pay, in a fair manner. And fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do.³⁴⁰

وَالْوَالِدَتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ
لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ
رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ
إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ
لَهُ بِوَلَدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا
فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا
وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْرِضُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا اسَلْتُمْ مَا اتَيْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا
اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣٤٠﴾

^a31 : 15 ; 46 : 16. ^b65 : 7. ^c2 : 287 ; 6 : 153 ; 7 : 43 ; 23 : 63 ; 65 : 8.

240. Important Words :

يرضع (give suck) is derived from رَضِعَ i.e. he (the babe) sucked. اَرْضَعَتْ means, she (the mother or the wet-nurse) gave suck to the child. اسْرَضَعَ means, he arranged for the suckling of the child ; he engaged a wet-nurse for it. The infinitive-noun رِضَاعَةٌ signifies sucking. اخي من الرضاعة means, he is my foster-brother, both having sucked from the breast of the same woman (Aqrab & Lane).

حولين (two years) is the dual of حول (a year) which is the infinitive-noun from حَال meaning, it passed and became complete, or it passed from one state to another, or it turned round. A year is called حول because it is a complete measure of time and turns round and round. حول also means strength and power to do a thing as in the well-known formula لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (Aqrab).

وسع (its capacity) is derived from وسع meaning, it was sufficiently capacious. وسعت رحمة الله كل شئ means, God's mercy extends to, and covers, all things. وسع means capacity or power or strength. The infinitive-noun from it is سَمَةٌ meaning, breadth ; extent, capaciousness ; capacity and power. ذُو سَمَةٍ means, a man of means or a man of ample means (Aqrab).

تكلف (is burdened) is derived from كَفَلَ. They say كَفَلَهُ امْرَأًا i.e. he imposed on him the task of doing a thing, or he tasked him to do a thing. It also means, he ordered him to do a thing which was difficult or troublesome or inconvenient (Lane).

فمالا (weaning the child) is derived from فَلَ which is both transitive and intransitive, meaning, he separated, he divided, he partitioned ; or he got separated, he went forth

235. And "those of you who die and leave wives behind, ^bthese (wives) shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten *days*. And when they have reached the end of their period, no sin shall lie on you in anything that they do with regard to themselves according to what is fair. And Allah is aware of what you do."²⁴¹

وَالَّذِينَ يَتُوفُونَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرْتَضْنَ
بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ
فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٥﴾

a2 : 241. b2 : 229.

from. فصلت المرأة رضيعها means, the woman weaned her child, which is also a sort of separation between the woman and her suckling. هذا يوم الفصل means, this is the day when a decision or a distinction shall be made between the parties i.e. the doers of good and the doers of evil. فصال means, the weaning of a child from its mother or from the woman who suckles it (Tāj).

شار (consultation) is derived from شار. They say شار العسل i.e. he extracted honey from the honey-comb. شار الدابة means, he rode the beast in order to try it and ascertain its worth. اشار, besides giving the same meaning as شار, also means, he made a thing known, he pointed to a thing, he gave a word of good counsel to a person. شاره means, he consulted him, he sought his advice and counsel. تشار means, mutual consultation. مشورة and شورى give similar meanings i.e. consultation (Aqrab).

Commentary :

If a woman is divorced while she is pregnant, the question of the suckling of the child and the expense of bringing it up naturally arises. The verse under comment supplies the answer. It points out that the suckling of the child should last for two years at the maximum. But it is allowable to discontinue it before the end of that period, if the father and the mother both agree on that course. The verse also implies that the child is not to be weaned before

the end of two years without the consent of its mother.

The expression لا تضار is both in the active and the passive voice; the clause لا تضار لا تضر والدة مولدها may therefore mean that: (1) the mother shall not make the father suffer on account of her child; and (2) the mother shall not be made to suffer on account of her child; and both meanings are equally good and equitable. The words مولده (he to whom the child belongs) have been used here in preference to the simpler word والد (father), in order to point to the inherent right of the father to possess the child and to his natural responsibility for its maintenance.

The clause, and the same is incumbent on the heir, lays down an important social principle. If a father dies leaving behind a child, it is the duty of his heirs to bring up the child and maintain it until it reaches puberty. This shall not be considered an act of favour on their part, but an act of duty. One who inherits the property of a deceased person is in duty bound to bring up the children the latter may leave behind. He who receives a support from another must be prepared to give the same to him, when he may stand in need of it.

241. Important Words :

توفون (who die) is derived from توفى which is derived from وفى (wafā). They say وفى بالعهده i.e. he fulfilled his promise;

236. And there shall be no blame on you in throwing out a hint regarding a proposal of marriage to *these* women or in keeping *the desire* hidden in your minds. Allah knows that you will think of them *in this connection*. But make not a contract with them in secret, except that you say a fair word. And resolve not on the marriage tie until the prescribed period reaches its end. And know that Allah knows what is in your mind; so beware of it. And know that Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing.²⁴²

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خُطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ
أَوْ اَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ
وَلَكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا
مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا تَعْزِمُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ
الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ
فَاحْذَرُوهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٦﴾

he was faithful in his word. وفى فلانا حقه (waffā) means, he gave him his right in full. وفى gives both the meanings ascribed to وفى and وفى (waffā) above. وفى means, he took something in full, as they say وفى وفى i.e. he got or obtained his right in full. وفى الله زيدا means, God took away the soul of Zaid, leaving the body behind; God caused Zaid to die. وفى فلان means, his soul was taken away i.e. he died. In this case God is متوفى (mutawaffā) and the man who dies is متوفى (mutawaffā). الوفاة means, death (Aqrah). The Quran says: *God takes away the souls of men at the time of their death; and He also takes away the souls of men that have not died, during their sleep* (39 : 43). The Arabic idiom, which has the support of the Quranic usage, definitely shows that wherever God is فاعل (i.e. subject) and a being having a soul is مفعول به (i.e. object) the word وفى invariably means, the taking away of the soul.

Commentary :

After having dealt with the question of the remarriage of divorced women, the Quran in this verse proceeds to issue commandments regarding widows. The عدة i.e. the period of

waiting in the case of widows, is four months and ten days which roughly corresponds to four alternate periods of menstruation and purity combined. Islam has prescribed a longer period in the case of a widow as a mark of respect for her feelings at the death of her husband and has thus added to the dignity and sanctity of the marriage tie.

This verse also implies a rebuke to those who are opposed to widow remarriage, thinking it to be an insult to the family and a disgrace to the widowed woman. The words, *what is fair*, show that it is not only lawful, but preferable and desirable, for a widow to remarry. The words, *in anything that they do with regard to themselves*, obviously refer to remarriage. Elsewhere the Quran says, *And marry your widows* (24 : 33).

242. Important Words :

عرضتم (you throw out a hint) is derived from عرض meaning, he offered and presented a thing. عرض (‘arraḍa) means, he used an expression susceptible of different meanings; or he mentioned a thing not clearly but in a veiled manner; or he used words to convey a sense which the words used did not definitely convey (Lane).

- 31 237. It shall be no sin for you if you divorce women while you have not touched them, nor settled for them a dowry. But provide for them,—the rich man according to his means and the poor man according to his means—a provision in a becoming manner, an obligation upon the virtuous.²⁴³
- لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ
أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ۖ وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْوُسْعِ
قَدْرَهُ وَعَلَى النِّقْطَرِ قَدْرَهُ مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا
عَلَى الْحَسَنِينَ ﴿٢٣٧﴾

خطبة (proposal of marriage) is derived from خطب meaning, he addressed a meeting; he delivered a sermon. خطب المرأة means, he proposed marriage to her. خطبة (khutba) means, a sermon. خطبة (khitba) means, a proposal of marriage (Aqrab).

كن (you keep hidden) is derived from كنى. They say كنى الشيئ or كنى الشيئ meaning, he concealed the thing; he covered it. كنان means, a veil or covering, and مكنون means covered or hidden (Aqrab).

عقدة (tie) is the infinitive-noun from عقد meaning, he tied; he made a thing firm and fast. عقد الحبل means, he tied the rope; he tied it in knots. عقدة means, a tie; a contract that ties up or binds two parties; a marriage contract (Aqrab).

Commentary :

According to this verse it is forbidden to a man to make an open proposal of marriage to a widow within her عدة or the prescribed period of waiting. He who intends to marry a widow must keep his intention concealed from her. He may drop a hint indirectly suggestive of his intention. But he must on no account make an open suggestion or a formal proposal or even a secret proposal concerning marriage. A widow, too, is prohibited from giving her consent to such a proposal within the prescribed period. She must patiently wait for four months and ten days out of deference to the memory of her departed spouse and in order that her possible pregnancy may become

apparent, because a pregnant woman is not allowed to marry until she is delivered of the child.

The words, *beware of it*, are meant to caution men to be on their guard against disobeying these commandments which are meant for their own good. If God had not laid them down, all social order would have gone to pieces.

The divine attributes, "Forgiving" and "Forbearing," have been mentioned at the end of this verse not to hint that breach of these injunctions would find God Forgiving and Forbearing but that the exigencies of the circumstances required stricter laws in this matter, but as God knows human weaknesses, He has been lenient in this respect. So whatever commandment has now been given must be faithfully followed and all lapse be honestly guarded against.

243. Important Words :

متعوهن (provide for them) is derived from متع (mata'a). They say متع الشيئ i.e. the thing became tall. متع الرجل means, the man became well off. متع الله فلانا (matta'a) means, God granted him life and the necessities thereof. متع المرأة المطلقة means, he provided his divorced wife with necessities of life. متع به أو منه means, he profited by it for some length of time; he was afforded an opportunity to enjoy it. المتاع means, things that are necessary for life without affording opulence; things useful and necessary

238. And if you divorce them before you have touched them, but have settled upon them a dowry, then half of what you have settled *shall be due from you*, unless they remit, or he, in whose hand is the tie of marriage, should remit. And that you should remit is nearer to righteousness. And do not forget to do good to one another. Surely, Allah sees what you do.²⁴⁴

وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوا الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٨﴾

such as food, clothing, household utensils, furniture, etc. (Aqrah & Lane).

المقتر (the poor man) is derived from قتر. They say قتر على عياله i.e. he was niggardly towards his family. اقترال الرجل means, the man became poor and straitened in circumstances. المقتر is, therefore, one who is poor, one who is in straitened circumstances (Aqrah).

Commentary :

Circumstances might arise when a husband may consider it necessary or desirable to divorce his wife before they have had conjugal relations i.e. before the man has gone in unto his wife and even before any مهر (dowry) has been decided upon by the parties. The verse allows this procedure but makes it obligatory on the husband to see that in such a case his divorced wife receives suitable provision according to his means. Thus Islam seeks not only to provide for the divorced woman but to leave no trace of bitterness, which is very often the result of the dissolution of a marriage. The word المحسنين i.e. the virtuous or those who act benevolently, has been used to exhort the husband that the more generous he is in his treatment of his divorced wife, the more pleasing will his conduct be in the sight of God.

244. Important Words :

يعفو (should remit) is derived from ضا meaning: (1) he gave more than what was

due; or (2) he relinquished his right or remitted it in whole or in part (Taj). See also 2 : 220.

Commentary :

If the divorce occurs after the dowry has been fixed but before the husband has gone in unto his wife, the husband shall pay half of the fixed dowry. The clause, *he in whose hand is the tie of marriage*, may signify either the husband or the guardian of the divorced woman, because whereas after marriage the tie of marriage is in the hands of the husband, before marriage the guardian of the woman also holds it in his hands. In the former case, the word يعفو would mean that the husband should try to give more than half the dowry, or if he has already paid the whole dowry, he should try not to demand its return. If, however, the clause, *he in whose hand is the tie of marriage*, be considered to apply to the guardian of the divorced woman, the word يعفو would mean that he should try to remit or relinquish her right, i.e., he should, so far as possible, strive to give up even that which he is entitled to receive on behalf of the divorced woman. But God certainly prefers that the husband should make a greater show of generosity.

This is how each party is exhorted to vie with the other in acting generously toward the other, the husband by paying more than

239. "Watch over Prayers, and the middle Prayer, and stand before Allah submissively."²⁴⁵

حَفِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا

لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ ﴿٢٣٩﴾

^a23 : 10 ; 70 : 35.

what is obligatory on him, and the wife or her guardian by relinquishing what is due to her. If people truly inculcated such a spirit of sacrifice, the earth would indeed become a Heaven.

The expression, *And that you should remit is nearer to righteousness*, applies to the husband particularly; but it may, in its broader significance, apply to all—husbands, wives and guardians.

245. Important Words :

حَفِظُوا (watch) is derived from حَفِظَ. They say حَفِظَهُ i.e. he preserved it, or he guarded or protected it, or he prevented it from perishing or becoming lost. حَفِظَ الْقُرْآنَ means, he memorized the Quran, i.e. he learned it by heart. حَافِظٌ عَلَى الْأَمْرِ means, he watched over the thing; he attended to it carefully and constantly (Tāj).

قَانِتِينَ (submissively) is derived from قَانَتَ for which see 2 : 117. The word conveys, among others, three important meanings: (1) standing motionless, (2) refraining from speech and (3) standing submissively (Lane). All these meanings are applicable here.

Commentary :

This verse which stresses the importance of, and regularity in, Prayers appears to be rather oddly placed, being wedged in between verses relating to conjugal relations. But the very context of it explains the deep philosophy of its meaning. After marriage one is apt to become a little lax in Prayers, particularly the supererogatory *Tahajjud* Prayer (said in the latter part of the night). Besides, family life multiplies the cares of both man and woman.

Hence, the necessity of urging married people to be regular and punctual in their Prayers.

الصَّلَاةُ الْوُسْطَى (the middle Prayer) has been differently explained. According to some Commentators it is the *Tahajjud* Prayer, and according to others, it is the morning Prayer, while according to yet others, it is the late afternoon or 'Aṣr Prayer. The latter view is supported by some of the sayings of the Holy Prophet. For it is on record that on his missing the right time of the 'Aṣr Prayer, when engaged in repelling the repeated attacks of the enemy in the Battle of the Ditch, and having been obliged to combine it with the *Maghrib* or the sunset Prayer, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said : " May God curse the Jews (who were mostly responsible for this battle) ! They have prevented us from saying our middle Prayer in time " (Bukhārī). Truly speaking, however, the " middle Prayer " is the Prayer which happens to fall within busy hours. In the above-quoted tradition, the Holy Prophet called the 'Aṣr the " middle Prayer," because it fell within extraordinarily busy hours. The Quran has placed this verse here to point out *firstly*, that married life, and for that matter any life however busy, should not make man slack in the observance of Prayers, and *secondly*, that like this verse the middle Prayer is one which is surrounded by apparently incongruous elements. The style is peculiar to the Quran but is quite natural.

The clause, *and stand before Allah submissively*, teaches that besides aiming at complete concentration in Prayers the worshipper should observe three special injunctions : (1) he should refrain from speech, (2) he should stand

240. "If you are in a state of fear, then say your Prayer on foot or riding ; but ^bwhen you are safe, remember Allah as He has taught you that which you did not know.²⁴⁶

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَأَدْكُوا
اللَّهُ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٤٠﴾

241. And ^cthose of you who die and leave behind wives shall bequeath to their wives provision for a year without their being turned out. But if they themselves go out, there shall be no blame upon you in regard to any proper thing which they do concerning themselves. And Allah is Mighty and Wise.²⁴⁷

وَالَّذِينَ يَتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا وَصِيَّةً
لَهُنَّ أَزْوَاجُهُمْ مَتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ ۖ فَإِنْ
خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ
مِنْ مَعْرُوفٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٤١﴾

^a4 : 102. ^b4 : 104. ^c2 : 235.

motionless and refrain from making any movement, and (3) his general attitude should be that of submissiveness, as lack of these is liable adversely to affect concentration and detract from the sanctity of worship.

246. Important Words :

رجالا (on foot) is the plural of راجل (one who walks on foot) which is derived from رَجَلَ i.e. he walked on foot, رَجْل (rijl) meaning a foot. رَجُل (rajul) which means man is so called because man walks on foot and not on both hands and feet like quadrupeds (Lane).

ركبانا (riding) is the plural of راكب (one who rides) which is derived from رَكَب i.e., he rode an animal or a conveyance. One says, رَكَبْتُ الْفَرَسَ i.e. I mounted the horse. رَكَبَ الرَّجُلُ الْبَحْرَ means, the man embarked on a sea voyage. رَكَبَ ذَنْبًا means, he made sin his riding beast, i.e., he committed a sin (Lane).

Commentary :

The five daily Prayers constitute the most important worship in Islam. In no circumstances can a Muslim neglect his Prayers as long as he is sane and conscious. Even when a person is moving about in a state of extreme

fear and consternation, he must not fail to say his Prayers and should perform them on horseback or on foot, whether running or sitting or lying, as the case may be.

In view of this great importance of Prayers, a married couple can ill afford to be careless about them. The form in which Prayers are to be performed in time of ordinary fear or danger is mentioned in 4 : 102, 103 ; but the present verse refers to a state of extreme fear when one cannot observe even the form of ordinary صلاة الخوف, (Prayer in a state of fear).

The clause, *but when you are safe, remember Allah as He has taught you*, means that the injunction with regard to offering Prayers on foot or on horseback, etc., pertains to very special circumstances only. As soon as better conditions return, one should pray in the ordinary way as taught in the closing portion of the preceding verse i.e. one should stand motionless in Prayer and refrain from speech, etc.

247. Commentary

The middle verses, which came in like the middle Prayer, having ended, the Quran reverts

242. And for the divorced women also there should be ^aa provision according to what is fair—an obligation on the God-fearing.²⁴³

وَالْمُطَلَّاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

243. Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to you that you may understand.²⁴⁹

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

^a2 : 232 ; 65 : 3.

to the original subject of conjugal relations. The verse under comment is erroneously believed by some to have been abrogated by 2 : 235 and 4 : 13. Apart from the fact that the abrogation theory is based on lack of the knowledge of true teaching of the Quran, there is nothing in the verses referred to above which contradicts the provision contained in the present verse. The period of waiting laid down for a widow in 2 : 235 is four months and ten days in which time she can, as of right, claim residence and maintenance from the heirs of her deceased husband. The period of one year mentioned in the present verse has nothing to do with the above-mentioned period of waiting, as the words, *but if they themselves go out, there shall be no blame upon you*, clearly show. The present verse only contains a concession or a favour for a widow in addition to her right of residence and maintenance mentioned in 2 : 235. One year is about the time conveniently required by a widow for making suitable arrangements about her future. It is also the requisite time for a pregnant widow to be delivered of the child and relieved of the encumbrances attending thereto. Nor has this verse anything to do with the share of a widow in the property left by her husband as stated in 4 : 13. The concession about residence and maintenance for one year mentioned in the present verse forms no part of her share in the inheritance. The verse contains no obligatory injunction, but only an additional exhortation

to the heirs of the deceased person to show special kindness to the widow for a period of one year, just as the following verse embodies an identical exhortation in favour of a divorced woman.

248. Commentary :

Just as the preceding verse bestowed an additional favour on widows, the present one bestows an additional favour on divorced women. The injunction is particularly essential in the case of divorced women, because in moments of bitterness, which is the inevitable aftermath of a dissolved marriage, people are liable to be unjust and cruel towards their former wives. The verse warns them not to lose sight of the fear of God on such occasions and to act towards their former spouses not only with justice but with positive benevolence and kindness.

249. Important Words :

تَعْقِلُونَ (you may understand) is derived from عقل for which see 2 : 45. The word also signifies the sense of binding and restraining.

Commentary :

The verse points out that the above commandments have been given so that people might learn to act wisely and by exercising restraint on themselves refrain from breaking God's behests.

32 244. Dost thou not know of those who went forth from their homes, and they were thousands, fearing death? And Allah said to them: "Die"; then He brought them to life. Surely, Allah is Munificent to men, but most men are not grateful.²⁵⁰

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ
حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ
النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٤٤﴾

25 : 27.

250. Commentary :

The commandments relating to conjugal relations were mentioned as an offshoot of the subject of جهاد (holy war) dealt with in 2 : 217 and the following verses. The Quran now reverts to the original subject and by way of re-introduction cites the example of the Israelites who had left the land of the Pharaohs for fear of death. Trodden under the foot of the tyrant, the children of Israel were then in a most abject condition, and the wise God, in His eternal wisdom, decreed that they should lead a life of ordeals in the wilderness before becoming fit for the great life that awaited them in the Promised Land. The words, *Allah said to them: 'Die'*, point to the great truth that all life must be preceded by death i.e. great trials and extraordinary sacrifices.

As mentioned above, the clause, *those who went forth from their homes*, refers to the Israelites who had gone forth from Egypt to escape persecution by Pharaoh. It was the fear of death which had made the Israelites migrate from the land (2 : 50).

The words, *they were thousands*, contradict the Bible which represents the number of the Israelites migrating from Egypt as six hundred thousand. Recent researches favour the Quranic view (See *History of the People of Israel*, p. 145, by Ernest Renan, London, 1888, and *History of Palestine and the Jews*, i. 174 by John Kitto, London, 1844). See also. 2 : 55.

The story of the exodus of the Israelites is briefly this. When, being persecuted by Pharaoh, they left Egypt and crossed over to Asia, Moses wanted them to enter the Promised Land, but they were afraid of the people that dwelt there and refused to march ahead, saying *Go thou and thy Lord and fight and here we sit* (5 : 25). The result was that they drew upon themselves the wrath of God, Who said to Moses, *Verily, it shall be forbidden them for forty years; in distraction shall they wander through the land* (5 : 27). The promise was thus put off for forty years and the children of Israel were left to wander in the wilderness until those who had refused to fight perished in the desert, whereafter the younger generation led by Joshua conquered the land. Thus it was that the people whom God had caused to perish had new life breathed into them. It is with reference to these events that the Quran uses the word "die" in the verse under comment. This very death i.e. destruction of the rebellious and training of the youth through trials and ordeals, proved the forerunner of life. Elsewhere, the Quran says about the Israelites: *Then We raised you up after your death* (2 : 57).

It may also be noted here that from this verse onward the Quran begins the description of تَرْكِيه or means of national progress spoken of in 2 : 130, reference to "Signs" and "the Book" and "Wisdom" having already been made.

245. And ^afight in the cause of Allah and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.²⁵¹

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٥﴾

246. ^bWho is it that will lend Allah a goodly loan that He may multiply it for him manifold? And Allah receives and enlarges, and to Him shall you be made to return.²⁵²

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضِعَّهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْصُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٤٦﴾

^a2 : 191 ; 4 : 85. ^b57 : 12, 19 ; 64 : 18.

251. Commentary :

The clause, *and fight in the cause of Allah*, is addressed to Muslims, who are warned of the fate which overtook the Israelites when they refused to fight the enemy when called upon to do so by Moses. God tells Muslims that a people who fear death do not deserve to live. This is the first secret of national progress which the Quran inculcates, viz., that a people can live and prosper only if they shed the fear of death, and that those who are afraid of death die ignobly.

It is hardly necessary to point out here how well Muslims took this lesson to heart. When the well-equipped force of the Quraish came forth from Mecca to destroy the small and ill-equipped Muslim community of Medina, and the Holy Prophet consulted his followers as to whether they were prepared to face and fight the enemy, they told him that they would not behave like the companions of Moses who said to him, *Go thou and thy Lord and fight, and here we sit* (5 : 25) but that they would willingly fight on his right and on his left and in his front and at his back, and the enemy would not reach him except over their corpses, and that they would unhesitatingly plunge their horses even into the raging sea, if he only

wished them to do so. The tradition says that when the Holy Prophet heard these words from his Companions, his face beamed with joy and he said to them, "Then go forth and trust in Allah Who will be with you" (Tabarī & Hishām).

The words "All-Hearing" and "All-Knowing" point out that though Muslims were weak and without equipment, yet the help of their Lord was with them, Who heard their prayers and knew their condition.

252. Important Words :

اقترض (will lend) is derived from افترض which again is derived from فرض. They say افترض الشيء i.e. he cut or severed the thing. افترضه means, he gave him a loan. افترض فلانا means, he cut off for him a portion so that he may requite or recompense it. فرض means, the act of giving a loan; a loan itself; any good or evil act which brings reward or punishment (Lane).

يقبض (receives) is derived from قبض. They say قبض الشيء i.e. he got hold of it; he received it. قبض يده عنه means, he kept back or withdrew his hand from it. قبض الله رزقه means, God straitened his means and lessened his provision (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse gives the second means of national advancement, *i.e.*, free expenditure in nation-saving and nation-building affairs. If a nation desires to rise and prosper, it must spend money freely for national purposes, which include helping the poor and the needy. The Quran speaks of spending money in the cause of Allah as giving a loan to God, meaning thereby that money spent in the cause of God should not be regarded as something wasted or even consumed. It should be considered as something given to God as a loan which He would return to the lender manifold. The word loan, however, should not cause any misunderstanding. God needs no loans, for He is not only Self-Sufficient, but is also the Supporter and Sustainer of all other beings and things. He has used the term to indicate that one who spends in the cause of Allah will receive an ample reward from Him; his money, as it were, will be returned to him, being multiplied many times.

The interrogative form in the clause, *Who is it that will lend*, is used by way of exhortation, and the words, *a goodly loan*, have been added to indicate that this money is to be spent with a willing and cheerful heart.

It should be noted that apart from specifically national expenditures, the spending of

money to help the poor and the needy also is tantamount to giving a loan to God. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "God will say to the sinful man on the Day of Judgement, 'O son of man, I fell ill, but you paid Me no visit; I asked you for food, but you gave Me no food; I asked you for water, but you gave Me no water.' The man will say, 'O my Lord, when didst Thou fall ill that I did not visit Thee? When didst Thou ask for food that I did not give it to Thee? When didst Thou ask for water that I gave it Thee not?' God will say, 'O son of man, know you not that one of My servants fell ill and you did not pay him a visit; he asked you for food and you did not give it to him; and he asked you for water and you gave him no water'" (Muslim, ch. on *Birr wal Šila*). This shows that spending money for the poor and the needy is tantamount to giving money to God.

The words, *Allah receives and enlarges*, signify that God accepts the money spent in His cause and multiplies it exceedingly so that the reward a man gets is out of all proportion to what he spends. The words, *and to Him shall you be made to return*, have been added to point out that, though virtuous men get their reward even in this life, yet what is in store for them in the next is still greater.

247. Hast thou not heard of the chiefs of the children of Israel after Moses, when they said to a Prophet of theirs: 'Appoint for us a king that we may fight in the cause of Allah'? He said: ^a 'Is it not likely that you will not fight, if fighting is prescribed for you?' They said: 'What reason have we to abstain from fighting in the cause of Allah when we have been driven forth from our homes and our sons?' But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back except a small number of them. And Allah knows the transgressors well.²⁵³

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّهِمْ ائْتِ بِمَلِكٍ لَنَا نَقَاتِلُ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ
الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَائِنَا
فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٤٧﴾

^a4 : 78.

253. Important Words :

الام (chiefs) is derived from ملأ. They say ملأ الاماء الماء i.e. he filled the vessel with water. ملأ رعبا means, he was filled with fright. الاماء means : (1) assembly of persons ; (2) chiefs and nobles, for they fill the eyes and hearts of the commoners with awe and admiration ; or because with them a meeting becomes full and appears to be properly attended. الاماء الاعلى means, the community of high placed angels (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The Quran now proceeds to give the story of how the different tribes of Israel were welded into one great nation, also noting incidentally the weaknesses displayed by them, so that their example may serve as a lesson to Muslims.

The incident mentioned in the verse under comment indicates an improvement in the condition of the Israelites in the time to which this verse relates over that of the time of Moses himself. In 5 : 25 the Quran relates that when Moses exhorted his followers to fight the enemy in the cause of Allah, they replied, *Go thou and thy Lord and fight, and here we sit.* On the contrary, in the present verse the Israelites are reported to have said, *What reason have we to abstain from fighting in the cause of Allah when we have been driven forth from our homes and our sons?* The improvement, however, was more verbal than real ; for when the time of actual fighting came, many of these people wavered and refused to fight. The incident thus serves as a grim warning to Muslims to beware of treading the same path.

248. And their Prophet said to them, 'Allah has appointed for you Tālūt as a king.' They said: 'How can he have sovereignty over us while we are better entitled to sovereignty than he, and he is not given abundance of wealth?' He said: 'Surely, Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and body.' And "Allah gives sovereignty to whom He pleases and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing."²⁵⁴

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ
مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ
أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ
قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي
الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ
وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٨﴾

3 : 27.

254. Important Words :

طالوت (*Tālūt*) is the attributive name of an Israelite king who lived about two hundred years before David and about the same number of years after Moses. Most Commentators regard *Tālūt* to be a name of Hebrew origin and consider him to be synonymous with Saul (1. Sam. ch. 9). As Hebrew is only an offshoot of Arabic, the word *Tālūt* appears to be derived from the Arabic root طال *i.e.* he became tall or high—a description coinciding with the one given in the verse under comment *viz., one increased abundantly in knowledge and body*. It is, however, not right to identify *Tālūt* with Saul. The description of the Quran fits more with Gideon (Judg. chs. 6—8) than with Saul. Gideon lived in about 1250 B.C. and the Bible calls him a "mighty man of valour" (Judg. 6 : 12) which is the same as *Tālūt*.

Commentary :

There has been a difference of opinion as to the identity of the person to whom the name *Tālūt* has been applied. According to a number of Muslim Commentators, *Tālūt* stands for Saul, and the passage refers to the reign of Saul. Christian writers have, however, taken exception to this view. According to them the

incidents related in this passage refer to two different periods which are separated from each other by the long interval of 200 years ; and these critics refer to this passage as an instance of historical anachronism found in the Quran. The passage does indeed refer to two different periods, but if Christian critics had carefully thought over their own history, they would have seen that there is no confusion of dates in the passage in question and that the Quran has here referred to both these periods. Its object in doing so is to show how the unification of the different tribes of Israel began in the time of Gideon (*i.e.* *Tālūt*) two hundred years before David, and was finally consummated in the time of David.

In order to determine the identity of *Tālūt*, let us glance over the main incidents related in verses 247 to 252. These are as follows :

1. The people of the period to which *Tālūt* belongs had been driven forth from their homes and their children (2 : 247).
2. One who was not originally a king was appointed as such (2 : 248).
3. God helped the followers of this king, giving them the *Tābūt* as a token of his sovereignty (2 : 249).
4. The people were tried by means of water (2 : 250).
5. There existed a

great disparity in numbers between these people and the enemy, and the trial reduced their number still further (*ibid*). 6. In spite of the small number of his followers this king overcame the enemy (2 : 252).

Now some of these details do indeed apply to Saul, but there are others which do not. The key words which afford a clue to the identity of *Tālūt* are, *Hast thou not heard of the chiefs of the children of Israel after Moses*. The words "after Moses" indicate that the incident belongs to an early period when the Jews as a nation had just begun to take a definite shape in history. For two hundred years after Moses the Israelites were divided into different tribes and had no king and no fighting force. In 1256 B.C., owing to their iniquity, God delivered them into the hands of the Midianites who plundered and ravaged them for seven long years, and they were compelled to take refuge in caves (Judg. 6 : 1, 2). This is why they are represented in the Quran as saying, *we have been driven forth from our homes*. The Midianites attacked them and carried away their sheep and oxen and asses, and destroyed their crops and pillaged them as far as Gaza (Judg. 6 : 4—6). The Israelites then cried to their Lord, and God raised among them a Prophet; and an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, appointed him king and promised him divine help. Then Gideon said to God, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judg. 6 : 15). This tallies with the description given in the Quran which represents the chiefs among the Israelites as saying with regard to the new king, *How can he have sovereignty over us while we are better entitled to sovereignty than he and he is not given abundance of wealth* (2 : 248). What makes the identification of *Tālūt* with Gideon still more certain is the fact that it was in the time of Gideon and not Saul that the Israelites

were tried by means of water and the description of the trial as given in the Bible (Judg. 7 : 4—7) is the same as that of the Quran.

From Judg. 7 : 6, 7 we learn that after the aforesaid trial there remained with Gideon only 300 men. It is interesting to note that a Companion of the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "We were 313 men in the Battle of Badr, and this number corresponds to the number of men who followed *Tālūt*" (Tirmidhī, ch. on *Siyar*). Thus this tradition also lends support to the conclusion that *Tālūt* was no other than Gideon.

What further confirms the identity of *Tālūt* with Gideon is that the Hebrew word Gideon is identical in meaning with the Arabic word *Tālūt*. The former is derived from a root which in Hebrew means "to fell" (Enc. Bib.) or "to hew" (Jew. Enc.). Thus Gideon means "one who cuts down his adversary and fells him to the ground" and the Bible itself speaks of Gideon as a "mighty man of valour" (Judg. 6 : 12), and we have already noted that in Arabic *Tālūt* means one who is tall and towers above others (see Important Words above).

The clause, *how can he have sovereignty over us while we are better entitled to sovereignty than he, and he is not given abundance of wealth*, indicates that the people raised two objections against *Tālūt* or Gideon : (1) that he did not belong to a highly placed family and was therefore not entitled to kingship, and (2) that he did not possess the requisite wealth for exercising influence. Both of these are plausible objections that are usually made by ordinary people of the world; but a chosen people guided by the will of the Just and Wise God must think otherwise. With them the real title to sovereignty is neither family status nor wealth but the personal qualities of a man; hence the clause, *surely Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and body*. The superiority of a man in physical and mental faculties coupled

249. And their Prophet said to them: The sign of his sovereignty is that there shall be given you a heart wherein there will be tranquillity from your Lord and a legacy of good left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron,—the angels bearing it. Surely, in this there is a Sign for you if you are believers.'²⁵⁵

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ
التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا
تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنَّ
فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٤٩﴾

with knowledge and prowess must remain the basis for all title to rulership. And in the case of *Talūt* the title had the additional strength of coinciding with the choice of God Who is the best and, in fact, the only true Judge of all titles.

255. Important Words :

التَّابُوت (heart) is derived from تاب *i.e.* he returned; he returned to God; he repented; he left off the way of sin and began to tread the path of rectitude. التَّابُوت means: (1) a chest or box, as things are repeatedly taken out of, and returned to, it; (2) a coffin or a bier; (3) chest or breast or bosom or the ribs with what they contain, as the heart, etc. (Lane); (4) the heart which is the storehouse of knowledge, wisdom and peace (Mufradāt).

سَكِينَةٌ (tranquillity) is derived from سكن *i.e.* it became calm and tranquil, سَكِينَةٌ means, peace, tranquillity, calmness, freedom from agitation and disturbance (Aqrab & Lane).

بَقِيَّةٌ (legacy) is derived from بقى *i.e.* he or it remained behind; or he or it continued or lasted for long or for ever. بَقِيَّةٌ means, that which remains behind *i.e.* legacy; remainder; remains; remnant; residue; relic; the best portion of a thing, as it is always the best part of a thing that survives. فَلَانِ بَقِيَّةُ الْقَوْمِ means, such a one is the best and the most excellent of the party (Lane).

Commentary :

Though Commentators have differed about the significance of the word تَابُوت and the Bible

mentions it as an "ark" or chest, the description of the Quran definitely shows that the word has been used here in the sense of "heart" or "bosom." The words of the Quran are: *wherein there will be tranquillity from your Lord.* Now this description cannot apply to an ark or a chest; for, far from granting peace and tranquillity to others, the ark spoken of by the Bible could neither protect the Israelites against defeat nor could it protect itself, and was carried away by the enemy. Even Saul who took with him the ark during his campaigns suffered crushing defeats, so much so that even the enemy pitied him and he met with an ignominious end. Such an ark could not be a source of tranquillity to the Israelites. What God gave them was a heart full of tranquillity which was aided by angels who buoyed up the Israelites and filled their hearts with courage and perseverance so that after the coming of the said tranquillity they successfully resisted the attacks of the enemy and inflicted heavy defeats on them.

Another favour which God conferred on the Israelites has been referred to in the word بَقِيَّةٌ or legacy. God imbued their hearts with the noble qualities which characterized their ancestors, the people or the descendants of Moses and Aaron. The legacy left by the descendants of Moses and Aaron did not consist of any material things but referred to the good qualities which they were given as the heritage of their great ancestors. This heritage was

R. 33 250. And when Tālūt set out with the forces, he said: 'Surely, Allah will try you with a river. So he who drinks therefrom is not of me; and he who tastes it not is assuredly of me, except him who takes a handful of water with his hand.' But they drank of it, except a few of them. And when they crossed it—he and those who believed along with him—they said: 'We have no power today against Jālūt and his forces.' But those who knew for certain that they would *one day* meet Allah said: "How many a small party has triumphed over a large party by Allah's command! And Allah is with the steadfast."²⁵⁶

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ
بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ
يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ
فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ
بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا
اللَّهِ كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ
اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٢٥٠﴾

²⁵⁶ 3 : 124 ; 8 : 66.

similar to the one to which reference has been made in the words, *that (he) may be heir to me and to the House of Jacob* (19 : 7). Evidently, it is not a material heritage but a spiritual and moral heritage that is mentioned in this verse. Similarly, the followers of Gideon were imbued with a spiritual and moral *بقية* i.e. such noble attributes of Moses and Aaron and their descendants as God had endowed them with. It was a sign that it was God Who had set up Gideon as king over the tribes of Israel so that he might protect them against the ravages of their enemy and breathe into them a martial spirit, a work which saw its consummation in the days of David.

256. Important Words :

نهر (river). The verb **نهر** means, it flowed with force. They say **نهر الدم** i.e. the blood poured forth with force. **نهر الماء** means, the water poured forth in the land and cut out a channel for itself. **النهر** (*al-nahr*) means, a body of flowing water, i.e., stream or river; channel

through which such water flows. **النهر** (*al-nahr*) means, (1) plenty and abundance; (2) a river channel; (3) a river (*Aqrah*).

الجنود (forces) is the plural of **الجند**. They say **جند الجنود** i.e. he collected or gathered together his forces. **الجند** means, a force or an army; helpers (*Aqrah*).

جالت (*Jālūt*) is derived from **جال** i.e., he ran about without stopping. They say **جال الفرس في الميدان** i.e., the horse galloped about in the field, sometimes going this way and sometimes that way. **جال القوم جولة** means, the people drew back and then made a joint onslaught. **جال بعضهم على بعض** means, they assailed or assaulted one another in battle, etc. (*Aqrah & Tāj*). Thus **جالت** is an attributive name meaning, a person or a people who is unruly and moves about attacking and assaulting others. In the Bible the parallel name is Goliath (1 Sam. 17 : 4) which means, "running, ravaging and destroying spirits" or "a leader or a giant" (Enc. Bib. and Jew,

251. And when they issued forth to encounter Jālūt and his forces, they said: 'O our Lord, "pour forth steadfastness upon us, and make our steps firm, and help us against the disbelieving people."²⁵⁷

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ٥١

^a3: 148, 201; 7: 127. ^b2: 287; 3: 148.

Enc.). The Bible uses the name about one individual but really the word signifies a party of ruthless freebooters, though it may also be applied to certain individuals symbolizing the characteristics of the party. The Quran appears to have used it in both these senses in the verses under comment.

Commentary :

Self-control and discipline are the key to most successes, and possession of these qualities is necessary successfully to meet God's trials. The present verse speaks of one such trial. The exception of a handful of water was made with a twofold purpose: (1) to afford the marching force an essential physical relief by permitting them to moisten their parched throats, but at the same time to prevent them from drinking freely, which would have damped their spirits and made them negligent of the enemy; and (2) to make the trial all the more tantalizing, for in many cases it is easier to withhold from a thing altogether than to use it in a strictly limited measure. The Bible mentions the incident in Judg: 7: 5-6.

The concluding clause, *i.e., how many a small party has triumphed over a large party by Allah's*

command, contains a mighty lesson of hope for the righteous. When God wills a thing, numbers do not matter. The truth of this statement has been borne out by history in all ages.

The *Jālūt* spoken of in this verse does not signify a person but a people, while the word *جُود* (forces) points to the helpers and associates of these people. The Bible refers to *Jālūt* under the name of Midianites who pillaged and harassed the Israelites and destroyed their land for several years (Judg. 6: 1-6). The Amalekites and all the eastern tribes assisted the Midianites in their raids (Judg. 6: 3) and formed "the forces" referred to in the verse.

257. Commentary :

The trial by water referred to in the preceding verse and the subsequent exhortation mentioned in the concluding clause of that verse seem to have filled the Israelites with hope and courage. Consequently their prayer in the verse under comment does not betray a defeatist tendency as heretofore shown by them, but a buoyant spirit of hope and good cheer.

252. So they routed them by the command of Allah; and David slew Jālūt, and Allah gave him sovereignty and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. And "had it not been for Allah's repelling men, some of them by the others, the earth would have become filled with disorder. But Allah is Munificent to *all* peoples.²⁵⁸

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَ
أَنَّهُ اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ وَالْحِكْمَةُ وَعَلَّمَهُ مَتَا يَشَاءُ وَ
لَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمُ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ
الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٥٢﴾

253. These are the Signs of Allah; We recite them unto thee with truth. Surely, thou art one of the Messengers.²⁵⁹

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ
الرُّسُلِينَ ﴿٢٥٣﴾

^a22 : 41.

258. Commentary :

Tālūt or Gideon was able to defeat *Jālūt* or the Midianites and curb their rising spirits, but their crushing defeat to which the verse refers as the killing of *Jālūt* came in the time of David about two hundred years afterwards. This is why, whereas the defeat of *Jālūt* by *Tālūt* has been spoken of by the Quran as *هَزَمَ* i.e. routing, the complete crushing of their power has been referred to by the word *قَتَلَ* i.e. killing. The Bible speaks of the man defeated by David as Goliath (1. Sam. 17 : 4), which is similar to *Jālūt*. Probably the attributive name given by the Quran to the people was also borne by their leader in the time of David.

The last clause of the verse, i.e., *and had it not been for Allah's repelling men, some of them by the others, the earth would have become filled*

with disorder, gives in a nutshell the whole philosophy of all wars of truth and justice. War should be resorted to only as a means of checking disorder and restoring peace, and not for creating disorder and breaking peace. The clause also serves as a criterion between Muslims and their adversaries and beautifully points to the party destined for final victory in the struggle.

259. Commentary :

The story of *Tālūt*, *Jālūt* and David has been fittingly concluded by God with the verse under comment to point out that these incidents have been referred to by the Quran not by way of telling a story but as divine Signs in order to hint that the Prophet of Islam, being also a Messenger of God, is sure to receive at least the same help and succour as was received by His Messengers of yore.

254. "These Messengers have We exalted, some of them above others: among them there are those to whom Allah spoke; and some of them He exalted by degrees of rank. And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and strengthened Him with the Spirit of holiness. And if Allah had so willed, those *that came* after them would not have fought with one another after clear Signs had come to them; but they did disagree. Of them were some who believed, and of them were some who disbelieved. And if Allah had so willed, they would not have fought with one another; but Allah does what He desires.²⁶⁰

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ
مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ وَآتَيْنَا
عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ
وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ
بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَكِنْ اخْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ
آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوا
وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ

^a17 : 56. ^b4 : 165. ^c4 : 159 ; 19 : 58. ^d2 : 88. ^e4 : 56 ; 10 : 41.

260. Important Words :

افتلرو and اقتل (fought with one another) are derived from قتل i.e., he killed. اقتلرو means, they fought with, and attempted to kill, one another (Aqrab).

Commentary :

This verse supplies an answer to an implied question that naturally arises from the preceding verse. The Prophets that had been raised previous to Islam were sent to particular peoples and their missions were confined to specified periods, but the Holy Prophet was sent to all nations and for all times. Hence it may be argued that the case of David or similar other Leaders who had to deal with certain hostile tribes could not apply to him. God answers this implied question by saying that the previous Prophets also were not all alike, for some of them were greater in rank and had to perform more difficult tasks than others. David, for instance, whose name has just been mentioned as the final link in the chain of the Israelite Prophets and kings who had to contend with their enemies, performed a much greater work

than many of his predecessors. So the final victory promised to the Holy Prophet should not appear doubtful in the eyes of the people.

The clause, *among them there are those to whom Allah spoke and some of them He exalted by degrees of rank*, does not mean that there are some Prophets to whom Allah does not speak or that among them there are those who are not raised in rank. The expression has been used to point out that there are two kinds of Prophets : (1) those who bring a new Law, i.e., those who receive revelation bearing new and direct commandments from God ; and (2) those who are not Law-givers i.e. those whose prophethood consists only in the loftiness of their spiritual rank. By the word "speaking" therefore is here meant a special kind of speaking i.e. a revelation which brings a new Law. Thus those Messengers who are represented here as having been "spoken to" by God are the Law-giving Prophets, while those who are spoken of here as having been simply raised in rank are those Messengers of God who are raised to the rank of Prophets without

being given any new Law. Of Moses who was a Law-giving Prophet the Quran says: *And Allah conversed with Moses particularly and freely* (4:165). That there are two kinds of Prophets, (1) **مكلم** (to whom God speaks particularly) i.e. Law-givers, and (2) **غير مكلم** (to whom God does not speak in that particular manner) i.e. Non-Law-givers, is also clear from the sayings of the Holy Prophet. For instance, when asked by Abū Dharr whether Adam was a Prophet, the Holy Prophet is reported to have answered, "Yes, he was a **مكلم** (*Mukallam*) Prophet" (Musnad). The addition of the word *Mukallam* to the word Prophet clearly shows that Prophets are of two classes, *Mukallam* (Law-givers) and *Ghair Mukallam* (Non-Law-givers). Adam was a Law-giver because it was he who brought the elementary Law.

The Arabic clause **منهم من كرم الله ورفعه بعضهم درجات** may also be rendered as, "among them there is he to whom Allah spoke and one of them He exalted by degrees of rank." In this case the clause would signify that by the Prophet to whom Allah spoke is meant Moses and by the Prophet whom He exalted by degrees of rank is meant the Holy Prophet to whom God did not only speak, as He speaks to all Prophets, but whom He raised above all others by so many degrees.

The clause, *And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs*, does not mean that other Prophets were not granted such proofs. As a matter of fact, all Prophets are given clear proofs and all are strengthened with the Spirit of holiness; but here God makes particular mention of Jesus in order to refute the objections of the

Jews who declared that he had shown no Sign and that he was possessed with an Evil Spirit (Luke 11:15, 16). The Quran declares that Jesus was not an impostor, as the Jews believe, but a true Prophet, and that he was not possessed with the Devil but, like all other holy men, was aided with the Spirit of holiness. In this connection see also note on 2:88.

The Arabic clause translated as, *if Allah had so willed, those that came after them would not have fought with one another*, does not mean, as some may wrongly think, that God is the originator of differences. The expression like **لو شاء الله** according to the Quranic idiom, does not simply mean "if Allah had willed" but "if Allah had acted according to His will" i.e. if He had enforced His will. In fact, Allah has, in His infinite wisdom, made man free to choose or reject a thing as he likes. That being so, differences are sure to arise among men. But God does not remain a placid on-looker; for whenever differences become vast and acute, He raises a new Reformer. This is why when discord and disagreements began to rend the ranks of the followers of the previous Prophets, God, in accordance with His old law, raised the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The words, *Allah does what He desires*, further indicate that the infinite wisdom of God demanded that man should be made a free agent. So God does not compel anyone to adopt this course or that. He has given man the power to choose the good or the evil course as he may like and God rewards him accordingly; He does not force any one to accept the truth; nor should the Faithful.

255. O ye who believe! ^aspend out of what We have bestowed on you before the day comes wherein there shall be no buying and selling, ^bnor friendship, ^cnor intercession; and it is those who disbelieve that do wrong to themselves.²⁶¹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ
أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ
وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٥٥﴾

^a2 : 196 ; 14 : 32 ; 47 : 39 ; 57 : 11 ; 63 : 11. ^b14 : 32 ; 43 : 68. ^cSee 2 : 49.

261. Important Words :

باع (buying and selling) is derived from باع i.e., he sold; or he bought; or he bartered (Aqrab).

خلة (friendship) is derived from خل. They say خل الشيء i.e. he pierced the thing and made a hole through it. خل في دعائه means, he was very particular in his prayer. خل إليه means, he was in need of his help and support. خاله means, he made friends with him and took him as brother. خلة is, therefore, that friendship or love which penetrates the heart and takes root in it. خليل is one whose friendship and love is very deep and sincere; a most loving and bosom friend (Aqrab). The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "If I had taken any one as my خليل I would have taken Abū Bakr as such, but my خليل is God" (Bukhārī, ch. on *Manāqib al-Nabī*).

شفاعة (intercession). See note on 2 : 49.

Commentary :

Though, as the preceding verses point out, the final victory of the Holy Prophet of Islam was sure, yet the path before Muslims was not strewn with roses. They had to make great

sacrifices in order to reach the goal. It is to this fact that the verse under comment points. It makes particular reference to financial sacrifices.

The words, *wherein there shall be no buying and selling*, do not mean that there will be no trade and commerce on the Day of Judgement, but that on that great day nobody will be able to buy salvation, which will depend only on one's good works coupled with God's grace. The only buying or selling that will be of avail to men on the Day of Judgement will be that which they shall have made in their present life (9 : 111).

The words, *nor friendship*, signify that there will be no occasion for forming new friendships on that day. Those, however, who will have taken God as their friend in their life on this earth will certainly benefit by that friendship. It is to this fact that the Quran refers when it says: *Friends on that day shall be foes to one another, except the God-fearing.* (43 : 68). The righteous have God as their friend, and He will continue to be their friend on the Day of Judgement.

For شفاعة (intercession), see note on 2 : 49.

256. Allah—there is no God but Him, “the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. ^bWho is he that will intercede with Him except by His permission? ^cHe knows what is before them and what is behind them; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth; and the care of them burdens Him not; and He is the High, the Great.²⁶²

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ
وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ
ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يُعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ
أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ
عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ٢٥٦

3: 3; 20: 112; 25: 59.

^bSee 2: 49. ^c20: 111.

262. Important Words:

الحى (the Living), of which the verb form is *حى* i.e. he lived or he had life, is an attribute of God, signifying that God is the only Being Who is deathless and lives by Himself—He needs no support, He is eternal and everlasting (Mufradāt & Lane). This is “life” in the truest sense of the word, and such life is enjoyed by God alone.

القيوم (Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining) is another attribute of God. The word is derived from *قام* i.e. he stood erect. *القيوم* means, the Being Who not only stands by Himself, requiring the support of none, but Who supports all others (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

سنة (slumber) is the noun-infinitive from *وسن* i.e. sleep or slumber took hold of him. *سنة* means, heaviness of limbs and eyes preceding sleep; sleep or slumber itself; negligence or unguardedness (Aqrab).

كرسى (knowledge) is derived from *كرس*. They say *كرس البناء* i.e. he raised the walls of a house. *كرسى* means, a throne or a chair or a stool, in fact, anything used for sitting on; buttress of a wall; knowledge; dominion

and power. Hence, *الكرامى* means, men of learning (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

This verse is known as *آية الكرسي* (*Āyat al-Kursī*) and is considered to be one of the most important verses, beautifully describing the unity of God and His great attributes. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the *Āyat al-Kursī* was the loftiest verse in the Quran (Muslim). The verse supplies an answer to an implied question. Even if Muslims made the sacrifices required of them in 2: 255, the task before them was so great that, based on worldly calculations, there appeared no hope of success for them. How then is the promised victory to come? The verse under comment provides a telling answer. The world was not without a Master. The destinies of its people were controlled by a Being Whose power was limitless, Whose knowledge knew no bounds, Who was ever vigilant, ever watchful, in Whose hands were the entire resources of the earth and the heavens. If such a Being willed the triumph of a party, who was there to thwart His way? The promised victory must come.

257. "There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.²⁶³

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ
فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ
اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥٧﴾

^a10 : 100 ; 11 : 119 ; 18 : 30 ; 76 : 4. ^b31 : 23.

For a detailed treatment of the subject of intercession see note on 2:49. The reason why no one shall be allowed to intercede for any person except with the permission of God is that nobody knows what is in the minds of men and consequently none is in a position to intercede for another. God alone knows the secrets of men's hearts and hence there can be no intercession except by His permission, for He alone knows who is deserving of it.

The clause, *they encompass nothing of His knowledge*, means that God's knowledge is unlimited; while the knowledge of others, whoever they may be, is limited; even Prophets know no more than what is apparent of the spiritual condition of their followers.

The word كَرَى (knowledge) may signify either knowledge or power; both give equally good meanings and are almost equally applicable. Allah's knowledge is as extensive as His power. Knowledge and power are indeed the two great pillars on which the throne of God and, for that matter, the controlling power of everyone in authority rests.

263. Important Words :

الطَّاغُوت (those who transgress) is derived from طَاغَ i.e., he transgressed; he exceeded the just limit. Hence طَّاغُوت is primarily one who exceeds the bounds laid down for him. The Devil (i.e., the Evil One) or such men as turn others from the right path as well as all idols come under the word *Tāghūt*. The word is

used both as singular and plural as in 4:61 and 2:258.

العروة (handle) being derived from عَرَا means : (1) the handle of a bucket or a mug, etc.; (2) a ring, etc. which is grasped and clung to for support, or anything which serves as a support (3) a pasture that remains green even in time of drought; (4) the best and excellent part of property and wealth (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The injunction to make special sacrifices in the cause of religion and to fight the enemies of Islam who had transgressed against the Faithful was likely to cause the misunderstanding that Allah desired Muslims to use force for propagating their religion. The verse under comment removes this misunderstanding. The object for which Muslims have been commanded to take up arms against the disbelievers is not to force them to accept Islam, but only to check mischief and put a stop to persecution. The verse enjoins Muslims in the clearest and strongest of words not to resort to force for converting non-Muslims to Islam. In the face of this teaching embodied in the words, *There should be no compulsion in religion*, it is the height of injustice to accuse Islam of countenancing the use of force for the propagation of its teaching.

The verse not only gives the commandment that in no case is force to be resorted to for the purpose of converting non-Muslims to

258. "Allah is the friend of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into light. And those who disbelieve, their friends are the transgressors who bring them out of light into darkness. These are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide."⁶⁴

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى
النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَهُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ
يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

⁶³: 69. ⁶⁵: 17; 65: 12. ⁶⁷: 28; 16: 101.

Islam, but also gives the reason why it should not be used, saying: *Surely, right has become distinct from wrong*, i.e., the true path has become distinct from the wrong one and therefore there is no justification for using force. Islam is a manifest truth. Anyone who sincerely desires to see this truth can easily see it; but if there is a person who does not desire to see it, no force can possibly make him do so. All that we have to do is to point out its beauties to non-Muslims; it rests with them to accept it or reject it as they like. اِيْمَان or faith as defined by Islam consists in believing in a thing with the heart or the mind and expressing that belief with the tongue. No force on earth can bring about that change.

The person who sticks to true faith and shuns false ones is here represented as laying hold of a strong مِرْوَةٌ ('urwa) which word, as shown above, gives a number of meanings. Taking it in the first-mentioned sense i.e., the handle of a mug, etc. the Quran compares Islam to the pure life-giving liquid which is put into a mug, and the believer is represented as taking fast hold of the handle thereof. Taking the word in the second sense, i.e., anything which is grasped and clung to for support, the true faith is represented as something on which complete reliance can be placed in all circumstances. If one adheres to it, there is no fear of one's stumbling or falling down. Following the third significance, i.e., a pasture that

remains green even in time of drought, Islam has been likened to a grazing ground the herbage of which is everlasting. There can be no spiritual famine in Islam. Following the last-mentioned meaning of مِرْوَةٌ Islam is represented as a store-house of spiritual treasures that are without equal.

264. Commentary:

The preceding verse spoke of "truth" and "error" as resulting from belief in Allah and belief in *Tāghūt* respectively. The present verse further develops the idea. According to Arabic idiom, the expression, *to bring out of darkness into light*, means "to lead to success and happiness not only in the spiritual but also in the physical sense"; and the opposite of it means, "to lead to failure and grief."

The word *Tāghūt*, explained under the preceding verse, here mainly refers to such mischievous leaders as turn people away from the right path. Through them disbelievers are being led to failure and grief and are also gradually losing whatever light of faith they possessed before the advent of the Holy Prophet. Their rejection of him has also led them to disown many truths which they acknowledged before. Add to this their deprivation of the light of the New Faith and the darkness becomes complete. On the contrary, Islam is not only bringing new light to its adherents but is also bringing them success and happiness.

35 259. Hast thou not heard of him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingdom? When Abraham said, "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death," he said, "I also give life and cause death". Abraham said, "Well, Allah brings the Sun from the East; bring it thou from the West." Thereupon the infidel was dumbfounded. And Allah guides not the unjust people.²⁶⁵

الْمَرَّةَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ
اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ
قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي
بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ
فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ٢٥٩

²⁶⁵ 3: 157; 9: 116; 40: 69; 57: 3.

265. Commentary:

The preceding verses spoke of the great rise and success in store for Muslims—their being brought out of darkness into light. Now the Quran proceeds to illustrate the promised rise and advancement. It takes us back to the days of Abraham.

An incident in the life of the great Patriarch has been cited to illustrate the truth of the statement made in the previous verse, viz., that God is the friend of believers; He helps them against their enemies and shows them the way of success, leading them out of darkness into light.

Abraham was a native of Ur of the Chaldees. His people worshipped the stars and their chief god was the Sun. Their greatest god was Merodach (or Madruk), who was originally the god of the morning and the spring sun. He was also called Bel i.e. Lord (Enc. Bib. and Enc. Rel. Eth. ii. 296).

Abraham was hostile to the worship of idols and false deities and vehemently preached against them. He once set fire to a house which contained wooden images. On another occasion, he broke certain idols to pieces and burned them, whereupon he was produced before the king, whose name is recorded as Nimrod (Gen. 10: 8, 9 and Jew. Enc. under Abraham) and who was also worshipped by the

people as a representative of their deities. The king, it appears, threatened Abraham with ruin and death, to which Abraham firmly and boldly replied that he could do him no harm, for it was His Lord God Who granted life and caused death. As the king laid claim to godhead, he wrathfully rejoined that it was he who exercised these powers. Now Abraham knew that Nimrod and his people believed that all life depended on the Sun, so if it was true that it was the king who controlled life and death, it meant that even the Sun was under the control of the king and that the final power of life and death attributed by Nimrod and his men to the Sun was a mere farce. So he pertinently asked the king to send back the Sun from the West to the East (i.e. put it aside), for in such case the Sun could not be recognized as the final controlling power. The king was in a fix. He could not say that he did not possess the power to send back the Sun, for that would have exposed him. At the same time he could not say that it was he who caused the Sun to rise from the East and set in the West, for his people looked upon the Sun as the supreme deity, superior to the king himself, and if he had claimed any power over the Sun, he would have surely roused the ire of his people against him. So he was dumbfounded and knew not what reply to make.

260. Or like him who passed by a town which had fallen down upon its roofs and exclaimed, 'When will Allah restore it to life after its destruction?' Then Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He raised him, and said, 'How long hast thou remained in this state?' He answered, 'I have remained a day or part of a day.' He said, 'Nay, thou hast remained in this state for a hundred years. Now look at thy food and thy drink; they have not rotted. And look at thy ass. And We have done this that We may make thee a Sign unto men. And look at the bones, how We set them and then clothe them with flesh.' And when this became clear to him, he said, 'I know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills.'²⁴⁶

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا
فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ
قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ
مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانْظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ
وَانْظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى
الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنْشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ
لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمْتُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٤٦﴾

²⁴⁶ : 15.

266. Important Words :

خاوية (fallen) is derived from خوى. They say خوى البيت i.e. (1) the house fell down in ruins; (2) the house became empty and untenanted (Aqrab).

عرش (roofs) is the plural of عرش (roof). They say عرش البيت i.e. he built a house. عرش means, he raised the roof of the house. عرش means : (1) the roof of a house; (2) the throne or the ceremonious chair of a king; (3) the pillar, etc. supporting a thing; (4) honour and prowess; (5) leaders and chiefs among men; (6) tent, canopy, shed etc. affording shade; (7) trellis supporting vines (Aqrab & Lane).

يتسنه (have rotted) is derived from سنه i.e. (1) it passed through a time extending over years; (2) it (food, etc.) became altered and rotten by the lapse of years or absolutely. سنه gives the same meaning as سنه (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The preceding verse contained one illustration of how Allah brings His friends out of darkness into light. The present verse cites, as hinted in the words, *or like him*, another illustration of how He breathes new life into a people after they have fallen and become degraded.

The ruined town referred to in the verse is Jerusalem which was laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar. The person who, as the verse says, passed by it was Ezekiel, the Prophet; and the words, *which had fallen down upon its roofs*, hint that it was soon after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar that Ezekiel passed by the town. Ezekiel was among the Israelite captives whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylon and who, in accordance with an ancient custom, were made to pass by the ruins of the town so that they might witness

with their own eyes how their city had been laid in ruins by the conqueror. Ezekiel, who was a great well-wisher of his people, was immensely pained to see the ruins of the sacred city and pathetically asked God when the time would come when the ruined city would be restored to life, i.e., when its inhabitants, the children of Israel, would come back to it, rebuild it and make it prosperous once more. This prayer, it appears, was heard by God Who showed him in a vision that the restoration asked for would come in a hundred years.

The clause, *then Allah caused him to die for a hundred years*, does not mean that Ezekiel was actually made to die and then raised to life again. It was, in fact, a vision which Ezekiel saw (Ezek. 37). The Quran sometimes mentions scenes seen in a vision as if they had actually happened, without stating that they were witnessed in a vision or a dream (e.g. 12:5). What actually happened was that Ezekiel saw in a vision that he had died and remained dead for a hundred years and then had come back to life. As he was the representative of his people, his death signified the death of the Israelites. Thus God informed him through this vision that the children of Israel would remain in their state of captivity and lifelessness for a hundred years, after which a new life would be given them and they would return to inhabit their sacred city. And this dream or vision actually turned out to be true. For Jerusalem was first invaded by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. and again in 587 B.C., when after a long siege the city was totally destroyed by his general in 586 B.C. Ezekiel probably saw the vision in 586 B.C. The city was re-built about 100 years after its destruction and thus the vision came true.

It is wrong to think that God actually caused Ezekiel to die and that he remained dead for a hundred years and was then brought back to life; for that would have been no answer to

his prayer, which did not pertain to the death and resurrection of any individual but to that of a town which was lying in ruins.

The words, *which had fallen down upon its roofs*, point out that Ezekiel saw the ruins soon after the destruction (not necessarily the complete and final destruction) of the town when the fallen roofs were still to be seen under the debris of the walls.

The words, *I have remained a day or part of a day*, are intended to express indefiniteness of time and mean, according to the Quranic usage, that Ezekiel did not know how long he had remained in that state. The words have been used in this sense in another passage of the Quran as well: *They said, We have tarried a day or part of a day. Others said, Your Lord knows best the time you have tarried* (18:20). Again, *They will say, We tarried a day or part of a day, but ask those who keep count* (23:114). In fact, (يوم) (day) here does not mean a day of 24 or 12 hours but time absolutely (see 1:4). The clause, *I have remained a day or part of a day*, may also refer to the time for which Ezekiel slept or the time he took in seeing the vision or the dream. Apparently Ezekiel thought that he was being asked about the duration of the time of the vision.

The clause, *Nay, thou hast remained in this state for a hundred years*, points out that although in one sense he had remained in that state for a hundred years (for he had dreamt that he had been dead for a hundred years), yet the statement that he had tarried for a day or part of a day, was also correct, for the time spent in seeing the vision was naturally very short. To bring home this fact to the mind of Ezekiel, God directed his attention to his food and drink and to the ass. That his food and drink had not become stale and that his ass was still alive showed that he had really tarried only for a short time. The words, *and look at thy ass*, also

261. And *remember* when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' He said, 'Hast thou not believed?' He said, 'Yes, but *I ask this* that my heart may be at rest.' He answered, 'Take four birds and make them attached to thyself. Then put each of them on a hill; then call them; they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty and Wise.'²⁶⁷

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ ارْنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِنْ لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٦١﴾

indicate that Ezekiel saw the vision while sleeping in his fields with his ass by his side, for while in captivity the Israelites were made to work in the fields as farmers.

The words, *that We may make thee a Sign unto men*, show that Ezekiel was to be made a Sign to men inasmuch as his vision, according to which Jerusalem was to become re-inhabited by the children of Israel, was to come true. The words, *look at the bones*, are intended to echo the words used by the children of Israel in those days of misery, viz. that they had become like dry bones and there was no hope of their being ever endued with new life (Ezek. 37: 11, 12). The words along with the accompanying clause meant that God had power to clothe the bones with flesh and to breathe new life into them. The bones were first to be set or placed in position and thereafter clothed with flesh i.e., the Israelites, then like dead bones, were first to be brought back to their town and then the process of the clothing of the bones with flesh, i.e., the rebuilding of the town, etc. was to be completed.

The vision of Ezekiel has been mentioned in the Bible in chapter 37 of his book.

267. Important Words :

نَحْيِ الْمَوْتَى (Thou givest life to the dead). For the meaning of حَيَاة (life) and مَوْت (death) and مَيِّت (dead person) see 2: 20; 2: 29; 2: 57 and 2: 74.

طمئن (be at rest) is derived from طمئن. They say طمئن ظهره i.e. he bent his back low. طمئن الشيء means, he made the thing calm and set it at rest. اطمأن means, it or he was at rest; it or he became calm after being agitated; it or he became docile and submissive. المطمئن means, (1) one who is calm and tranquil or in a state of rest or ease; that which is motionless and stationary; (2) if used in connection with some piece of land, it means a low-lying, soft piece of land (Aqrah).

صرهن اليك (make them attached to thyself). صرهن is derived from صار with واو as the central root letter. They say صار الشيء الى نفسه i.e. he inclined the thing to himself. صار وجهه الى means, he inclined his face towards me. صرت العن لاجنبي الثمر means, I inclined the branch towards myself in order to pluck the fruit. صار with ي as the central root letter, means, he cut a thing, etc. into pieces (Aqrah). The Quran uses صار with واو as the central root letter as the damma in صرهن indicates. Moreover, the preposition الى (to) determines the significance of the word in the sense of inclining or attaching and not cutting.

جزء (each) is derived from جزأ. They say جزأ الشيء i.e., he divided the thing into parts. So جزء means, part or portion or division of a thing (Lane). Thus, if a thing consists of, and comprises, a group, the word part or division would signify each member of it.

Commentary :

This verse provides yet another illustration of the process of life and death arranged by God in this world. In other words, the rise of a fallen nation is further discussed. Abraham asked God to show him how He caused a people to come to life after they had become fallen and degraded.

The difference between ايمان (belief) and اطمينان (heart being at rest) is that in the former state one simply believes that God can do a thing, while in the latter one receives the assurance that the thing would be done in his case also. Abraham did indeed believe that God could bring a dead people to life, but what he desired was the personal satisfaction of knowing that He would do so in the case of his own posterity as well; hence the words, *so that my heart may be at rest*.

The verse proceeds to describe a vision of Abraham. By asking him to take four birds, God hinted that his posterity would rise and fall four times. This rise and fall was witnessed twice among the Israelites, and the same phenomenon was to be repeated among the followers of the Holy Prophet of Islam who was descended from Abraham through Ishmael. The power of the Jews, the progeny of Abraham through Isaac, was crushed twice, first by Nebuchadnezzar and then by Titus (the Quran, 17 : 5—8; the Bible, II Kings ch. 25 and Enc. Brit. under Jews); and each time God raised them after their fall, the second revival having been brought about by the acceptance of Christianity by the Roman Emperors. As to the power of Islam, it was first rudely shaken when Baghdad fell to the arms of the Tartars, after which it again revived owing to the conquerors being won over to Islam. The second fall came later when there was a general and wholesale decline of Muslims both in the spiritual and the political field. The final rise is being arranged by God through the Ahmadiyya Movement founded by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

Referring to the verse under comment, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "We are more deserving of entertaining شك than Abraham" (Muslim). Here شك does not mean "doubt" but an intense hidden desire anxiously awaiting fulfilment, for the Holy Prophet never entertained any doubt. This shows that Abraham also never doubted and his question was not prompted by doubt but simply by an anxious desire. He had firm faith in the power of God and fully believed that He could restore a fallen people to prosperity; what he wanted was simply the satisfaction of his hidden desire, i.e., an assurance that God would do so in the case of his people also. The word شك therefore here only means the feeling of anxiety in the mind or the state of commotion or disturbance of the heart and mind (Lane).

The double fall and subsequent rise of the Israelites and of the posterity of Ishmael making the total number of such phenomena four may be interpreted in another way also. The Israelites were a fallen people before Moses and God raised them through him. They fell again before the time of Jesus and were again given new life through him. Similarly, the Ishmaelites were a fallen people before the advent of the Holy Prophet who gave them new life, and they are again a fallen people now when they are being given a new life by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

Many Commentators have translated the word *سرحن* as, "cut them into pieces and mince them", but this is clearly wrong; for as explained under Important Words above *سار* (with *واو* as the central root letter) means "inclining" and not "cutting," particularly when it is used with the preposition *الى*. So the expression *سرحن* would mean "make them inclined towards thyself," so that they may become attached to thee. In this case the placing of a *جزء* of the four birds each on a hill would mean, putting each

- .. 36 262. The "similitude of those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah is like the similitude of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies it further for whomsoever He pleases; and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.²⁶⁸

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٦٩﴾

263. They who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah, then ^bfollow not up what they have spent with taunt or injury; for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.²⁶⁹

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

^a2 : 266 ; 30 : 40.

^b2 : 265 ; 74 : 7.

separate bird on a separate hill, and not placing portions of the minced meat thereon. The commandment to place the four birds separately on separate hills is to point to the fact that the rise and fall of the progeny of Abraham would take place at four distinct and separate times. The word جزء has been used in this sense elsewhere also (15 : 45).

263. Commentary :

In the foregoing verses, it was pointed out that it is a law of God that He gives new life to deserving nations after they have become dead, and the case of the Israelites was mentioned as an instance. It was further indicated that the progeny of Abraham would rise four times, the Israelites and the Ishmaelites each rising twice. Now, in order to prepare Muslims for the promised rise, God reverts to the means of national progress and exhorts the Faithful to spend freely in the cause of God, pointing out that their case is like that of a seed which is multiplied 700 times and even more. Thus 700 times is the least reward that will be given to Muslims, and there is no limit to what God will bestow over and above this. History shows that this

promise was fulfilled to the very letter; for the reward which God gave to the early Muslims in this world was not only 700 times of what they spent in the cause of Allah but immeasurably greater; and the reward in the world to come will certainly be greater still.

269. Important Words :

مَا (taunt). They say من عليه *i.e.* (1) he did him a favour; (2) he talked of, or referred to, the favour he had done him and thereby taunted him with it (Aqrab). So من means both a favour as well as a reference to it with a view to taunting.

Commentary :

Every good may be abused, and the abuse of spending in the cause of Allah is to follow it with من *i.e.* boastfully speaking of one's services, and اذى *i.e.* following up a good act with an injury. Those who expend their wealth in the cause of Allah, are prohibited from making unnecessary mention of the money they spend and the services they render to Islam; for doing so would amount to من (taunt). Similarly they are forbidden to demand anything in return for their contributions; for this would

264. "A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-Sufficient, Forbearing."²⁷⁰

قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتَّبِعُهَا
اذًى وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٤﴾

“47 : 22.

amount to اذى (injury). Some men expect worldly advantages or try to seek help in their mundane affairs in return for their services in the cause of religion, and if such help is not forthcoming, they are displeased; or sometimes they desire to exact some work from those who are engaged in the service of religion and whom they help with money. All this would come under the definition of the word اذى; for such demands cause great injury and annoyance. Whether in the help of the community or of an individual, Islam condemns resort to من and اذى. It enjoins us to serve, but expects us to forget that we are rendering a service, for that would mar the good effect thereof.

270. Important Words :

غنى (Self-Sufficient) is from the verb غنى which means, he was or became free from want; he was in a state of competence or sufficiency; he was rich and wealthy. Thus غنى means, one free from want; one who is in a state of competence or sufficiency; one who is rich and wealthy. الغنى is one of the names of God, meaning the Self-Sufficient; One Who has no need of anyone in anything (Lane).

Commentary :

The divine attribute of Self-Sufficient has been used to suggest that if money spent in the cause of God is to be followed by "taunt" and "injury," it need not be spent at all, for He is Self-Sufficient. He needs no money. The order to spend is meant for the good of those who spend. So if the act of spending is abused and becomes a source of demoralization, God

does not approve of such spending. The attribute حليم (Forbearing) which also means "wise" and "intelligent" has been used here to suggest that the injunctions to spend money in the cause of God are given not because He stands in need of money but because He, the Wise God, knows that such acts are conducive to the good of man himself, the significance of "Forbearing" hinting that though God is slow in punishing, yet if such men continue undoing their own good actions by injuring the feelings of others, He would have to chastise them.

The clause, *A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury*, signifies that it is better to refrain from spending at all, if spending is to be followed by injury. In that case one should say قول معروف i.e. a kind word of sympathy or excuse to the person who asks for help, rather than give him help and then follow it up with injury. One should also observe an attitude of مغفرة (forgiveness) which literally means "covering up" i.e. one should cover and conceal the want of the person who comes for help and refrain from talking about it to others so that he may not feel ashamed. Or مغفرة may signify forgiveness on the part of him who asks for help i.e. he should forgive the person who expresses his inability to render help. Again, in case the spending spoken of in the verse refers to spending in national needs, قول معروف (kind word) would mean expression of good opinion, i.e., if one cannot spend without following it up with injury i.e. without criticizing those responsible for national expenditure, one had better refrain from spending at all.

265. O ye who believe! render not vain your alms by taunt and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men, and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day. His case is like the case of a smooth rock covered with earth, on which heavy rain falls, leaving it bare, smooth and hard. They shall not secure aught of what they earn. And Allah guides not the disbelieving people.²⁷¹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ
وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا
يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ
عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا
يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦٥﴾

^aSee 2 : 263. ^b4 : 39 ; 8 : 48. ^c14 : 19.

271. Important Words :

رَأَى (to be seen) is derived from رأى *i.e.* he saw with his physical or mental eyes. الرَّمَا means, to make a show of goodness or virtue without there being any sincere or genuine feeling behind it, simply to be seen of men (Aqrab & Mufradât).

رَحَان (smooth rock) is in the measure of صَفْوَان being derived from صَفَا *i.e.* it became clear or pure and was free from dirt, etc. صَفْوَان besides being used in the singular number is also the plural of صَفَاة meaning, a smooth and hard rock (Aqrab).

وَابِل (heavy rain) is derived from وَبَلَ. They say وَبَلَ بِالْعَصَا *i.e.* he beat or battered him with a rod continuously. وَبَلَ السَّمَاءُ means, the sky poured forth heavy rain (Aqrab).

صَلْدًا (bare, smooth and hard) is from صَلَدَ. They say صَلَدَ النَّارُ *i.e.* the material meant for producing fire gave out a sound but no spark. صَلَدَ الْأَرْضُ means, the earth became hard. صَلَدَ الْبَاغِي means, he turned away the beggar without giving him anything. صَلْدٌ is, therefore, spoken of such rock or piece of ground as is hard and smooth and grows nothing (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The verse makes it clear that a Muslim who follows up his charity with taunt and injury undoes his own good act and will have no reward with God. He is like a disbeliever who spends merely to be seen of and praised by men. The words, *and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day*, have been added because sometimes even a believer does a deed to be seen of men, and that act of his has a useful purpose. For instance, it is on record that once a Companion of the Holy Prophet was seen strutting before the hostile Quraish at Mecca. When the Prophet saw the man thus walking, he said, "this gait is hateful to God, but on the present occasion it is not so." In fact, there had been an outbreak of fever among the Companions who were greatly weakened thereby, and the aforesaid Muslim walked with a boastful gait in order to make a display of his strength so that the enemy might not think that the Muslims had been weakened by fever. This turned an ordinarily reprehensible act into a praiseworthy one. Elsewhere Muslims have been bidden to spend their money not only secretly but also openly (2 : 275), and the object underlying this injunction is that other Muslims,

266. And the case of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to strengthen their souls is like the case of a garden on elevated ground. Heavy rain falls on it so that it "brings forth its fruit twofold. And if heavy rain does not fall on it, then light rain suffices. And Allah sees what you do."²⁷²

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ
اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيثًا مِّنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ رَّبْوَةٍ
أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَاتَتْ أَكْطَامَهَا ضَعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا
وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٦٦﴾

^aSee 2 : 262.

seeing a brother of theirs expending money in the cause of God, may be induced to follow his good example. But he who has no faith in God expends his money openly solely with the object of winning the good opinion of men, and such a one has no reward with God.

The concluding portion of the verse likens a disbeliever to a smooth rock which is not fit for producing a crop; but sometimes, when it is covered with a layer of dust, some corn may grow on it, i.e., when circumstances are favourable and such person does some really good deed, he derives some benefit from it. But when he spends money merely for the sake of display and show, his good deeds are wasted, just as a heavy rain washes away the dust from the surface of a smooth and hard rock, leaving it bare and unproductive.

272. Important Words :

تَبَيَّنَ (strengthen) is derived from تَبَيَّنَ which means, he or it subsisted or lasted; he or it became fixed or stationary at a place; he was firm, stable, steadfast and unwavering. تَبَيَّنَ الْمَرْءُ means, the matter became proved and determined. تَبَيَّنَ means, he made a person or thing fixed and stationary, rendering him or it unable to move; he imprisoned him or inflicted on him a crippling injury. تَبَيَّنَ الْحَقَّ means, he strengthened or reinforced the truth with clear arguments. تَبَيَّنَ (thabbatahū) means, he made a person or thing firm, steadfast, unwavering and fixed; he strengthened him or

it so as to make him or it fit to endure all trials and shakings (Aqrab & Lane).

رَبْوَةٍ (elevated ground) is derived from رَبَّ. They say رَبَّ الْمَالِ i.e. the money increased and became augmented. رَبَّ الْوَلَدِ means, the child grew up. رَبَّ الرَّايَةَ means, he climbed the height. رَايَةً or رَبْوَةً means, a hill or elevated ground (Aqrab). رَبَّ (interest) is also from the same root and is so called because it is looked upon as a sure and unfailing means of increasing and multiplying wealth.

Commentary :

Spending money in the cause of Allah leads to the strengthening of the soul. The man who strives in the cause of God by spending his wealth imposes a burden on himself which makes him still more firm and steadfast in his faith. Besides, as he helps others with his money, God helps him and protects him from harm.

The hearts of the believers who spend freely in the cause of God are like elevated ground to which heavy rain, which sometimes proves harmful for low-lying grounds, can do no harm. On the other hand, it is benefited by rain, whether it is heavy or light.

In the verse under comment rain represents charity. Those who spend large amounts are referred to in the words "heavy rain," while those who can afford to spend only small amounts in the cause of Allah are referred to in the words "light rain" (see also 9:79).

267. Does any of you desire that there should be for him a garden of palm trees and vines with streams flowing beneath it, and with all kinds of fruit for him therein—while old age has stricken him and he has weak offspring—and that a fiery whirlwind should smite it and it be all burnt? Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to you that you may ponder.²⁷³

أَيُّودُ أَحَدِكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّجِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ
وَإِصَابُهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضِعْفًا ۖ فَأَصَابَهَا
إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ
الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۝

Both classes of men are benefited, inasmuch as they are granted more and more power to do good deeds and receive an ample reward from God, Who does not look to the amount of the money spent in His cause but to the proportion it bears to the money retained by the spender for his worldly needs. The word طَل (light rain), besides including the lightest of rains, also means "dew" (Lane) and has been used to point out that even the smallest amount spent in the cause of Allah has its reward.

273. Important Words :

ذُرِّيَّةٌ (offspring) is derived from ذَرَأَ or ذَرَأَ. The verb ذَرَأَ means, he sprinkled or scattered. They say ذَرَأَ فِي الْأَرْضِ i.e., he scattered the seed in the soil. ذَرَأَ النَّبَاتَ means, the vegetation sprouted forth from the ground. Similarly ذَرَأَ means, he increased a thing, etc.; or He (God) created. ذُرَّةٌ, of which the plural is ذَرَرٌ, means, small ant; motes or dust particles that float about in the air. ذُرِّيَّةٌ

means, children, offspring or progeny; human or other race descended from a common ancestor (Aqrab & Tāj).

Commentary :

By means of the similitude contained in this verse, a believer is reminded that if he spends his property for show or follows up his charity with taunts and injury, all that he has spent will be wasted, and on the Day of Judgement he will find nothing good in store for him. His case will be as wretched as that of an old man with little children and large property which as the result of an accident is suddenly destroyed, leaving him not only without means of sustenance for himself but also without provision for his children. When a man cannot bear to see himself and his little children go unprovided for in this life, which is after all a very short period, how can he bear that his work for the cause of Allah—a provision for his everlasting life in the next world—should be undone by his own action?

268. O ye who believe! spend of the good things that you have earned, and of what We produce for you from the earth; and seek not what is bad to spend out of it when you would not take it yourselves except that you connive at it. And know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.²⁷⁴

269. "Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you what is foul, whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. And Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing."²⁷⁵

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ كَسْبَتُمْ
وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَيَسَّبُوا
مِنْهُ تَنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِأَخِيذِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ
تُعْصُوا فِيهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ
حَمِيدٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُّكُمْ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ
بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُّكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً
مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٩﴾

^aSee 2 : 170 ; 24 : 22.

274. Important Words :

تَبَيَّنُوا (seek) is derived from تَبَيَّنَ or اِبْتَدَى. They say تَبَيَّنَ i.e., he sought it. تَبَيَّنَ فُلَانًا بِرُمحٍ means, he sought and singled out that person for attacking with his spear. تَبَيَّنَ الْأَمْرَ means, he sought and singled out the affair. تَبَيَّنَ لِلصَّلَاةِ means, he performed what is termed تَبَيَّنَ for his Prayers, i.e., instead of performing the prescribed ablution with water he sought dust and touching it with his hands passed them over his face, etc. (Aqrab & Mufradât).

خَبِيثٌ (bad) is derived from خَبَثَ i.e., he or it was or became bad or foul or abominable or wicked or filthy or impure (Lane).

اَتَمَضَى (connive) is derived from اَتَمَضَى which again is derived from اَتَمَضَى i.e. it became hidden and concealed. اَتَمَضَى فِي الْكَلَامِ means, he made his speech obscure, and abstained from making it clear in meaning. اَتَمَضَى means, he closed or shut his eyes; he connived at something so as to practically treat it as something unseen or hidden. اَتَمَضَى فِي الْبَيْعِ means, he demanded a lowering of the price of a thing owing to its badness. اَتَمَضَى عَنْهُ فِي الْبَيْعِ means, he connived at the bad quality of the

thing and was not strict in settling its price (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

The verse implies that believers should not only spend in the cause of Allah but should spend what is good and pure; for even a lawfully-earned property might include things that are bad. They should not deliberately select worthless and worn-out things for the purpose of charity. Old and second-hand things may indeed be given to the poor, but such things should not be specially selected or singled out for this purpose. Indeed, a believer can be said to have properly discharged his duty for "spending" in the cause of Allah only if he spends "good things."

275. Important Words :

فَقْرٌ (poverty). The verb فَقَرَ (faqara) means, he dug into the ground; he bored a hole into a pearl, etc.; he cut into and penetrated a thing. فَقَرَ (faqura) means, he became poor and needy. فَقَرَ (faqira) means, he had a complaint of his vertebrae. اَلْفَقْرُ signifies, poverty; want or need; care and anxiety or disquietude of mind. فُقِرَ, of which the plural is فُقَرَاءُ is one who is

270. "He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good; and none would be reminded except those endowed with understanding."²⁷⁶

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ
أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٢٧٠﴾

^a17 : 40.

poor and needy; also one having a complaint of the vertebrae, arising from fracture or disease (Aqrab).

Commentary :

The most handy weapon for Satan is to suggest to the people that if they spend their wealth in charity, they will become poor. But this is a most foolish suggestion; for, if people obey Satan, the result will be فقر *i.e.* national interests will suffer and the country will definitely decline in prosperity; and if the country declines, individuals cannot remain unaffected. Again, if we do not help our less fortunate countrymen, they will be tempted to resort to فحشاء *i.e.* foul and unfair means, and the community will become degraded in the eyes of others.

Two pairs of words occur in this verse and their order deserves notice. According to their significance, فضل (bounty) corresponds to فقر (poverty) and مغفرة (forgiveness or the covering of shortcomings) corresponds to فحشاء (foul or infamous conduct). Now, following the above significance of the words, the word فضل ought to have preceded the word مغفرة. But this order has not been observed in the verse, the reason being that whereas the first result of accepting Satan's suggestion, as mentioned in the present verse, is فقر and then comes فحشاء, the first and immediate consequence of one's spending one's wealth in charity is مغفرة and فضل comes afterwards.

Another reason of this order is that Satan cares more for wealth than good name; hence in his case فقر precedes فحشاء. But the right-

eous care more for God's forgiveness than for worldly prosperity, hence in their case the precedence of the former to the latter.

Forgiveness from Allah as promised here signifies that not only will men deal kindly and magnanimously with those who spend their wealth in charity, but God also will deal kindly with them. If a man helps the poor, people generally connive at his faults. Similarly, God will pardon his sins and forgive his shortcomings. Nay, He will do more. He will bestow grace and bounty on him, *i.e.*, He will make him prosper and thrive as a result of his charity. The verse also hints that if, in spite of the evil suggestions of Satan, we spend our wealth for the good of humanity, not only shall we prosper individually but also rise as a nation.

Finally God is واسع (Bountiful), hence His bounty will have no limit. He is also عليم (All-Knowing), hence He will help righteous men in ways beyond their wildest imagination.

276. Commentary :

The verse points out that the injunction regarding spending wealth in charity which is the secret of national advancement is based on wisdom. The word حكمة (wisdom) also alludes to the fulfilment of the prayer which Abraham had offered to God for the raising of a Prophet among the Meccans, who should teach them the Book and Wisdom (2:130).

The people who receive wisdom receive "an abundant good" and are thus sure to thrive and prosper if they act on it.

271. And ^awhatsoever you spend or whatsoever vow you vow, Allah surely knows it; and for the wrongdoers there shall be no helpers.²⁷⁷

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ نَفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِنْ نَذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٢٧١﴾

272. If you give ^balms openly, it is well and good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you; and ^cHe will remove from you *many* of your sins. And Allah is aware of what you do.²⁷⁸

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧٢﴾

^a22 : 30; 76 : 8. ^b9 : 60, 103, 104. ^c4 : 32; 8 : 30; 29 : 8; 64 : 10; 66 : 9.

277. Important Words :

نَذَرْتُمْ (you vow) is derived from نَذَرَ i.e. he made a vow, thereby binding himself to do an act the doing of which is not obligatory on him; he made a vow dedicating his child for the service of religion. نَذْر is a vow by which a man binds himself to do an act not obligatory on him, sometimes conditional on the acquisition of an object or the fulfilment of a desire in which case it amounts to a conditional promise. The word also signifies a votive offering (Lane & Agrab).

Commentary :

There is a tradition to the effect that the Holy Prophet did not approve of making conditional vows for the performance of non-obligatory acts of goodness; but if a man does so, fulfilment of the vow becomes obligatory.

The words, *Allah surely knows it*, mean that if a man spends in the cause of God, He will appreciate it and follow it with good results.

But as for those who do not spend or who break their vows, the punishment of God will visit such wrongdoers and no friend or sympathizer will be of any help to them. Similarly, in the life to come, neither will God help such men nor will the angels or the Prophets or other holy men help them with their intercession.

278. Important Words :

يُكَفِّر (will remove) is derived from كَفَرَ (*kaffara*) which again is derived from كَفَر (*kafara*) for which see 2 : 7. They say كَفَرْتَهُ سَيِّئَةً i.e. (1) He (God) covered or removed, or did away with his sin; (2) He expiated his sin; (3) He effaced or obliterated his sin (Lane).

Commentary :

Islam has most wisely recommended both forms of giving alms, i.e. open and secret. By giving alms openly, a man sets a good example to others and many begin to imitate him. Secret alms-giving is in many cases better, because in this way one refrains from exposing the poverty of his brethren and there is also little occasion for pride in secret giving. It should be noted that the word خَيْر (better) occurring in the verse is qualified by the words "for you," while the word نَعْمًا (well and good) is not so qualified, which points to the fact that whereas secret giving to the poor is better for the giver, open giving may often be conducive to more good for the community in general.

Again, the particle مِنْ (many) in the clause, "many of your sins" may, according to Arabic idiom, either be redundant and used merely for the sake of emphasis, or used in the sense of "many" or "some;" or it denotes اِبْتِدَاءُ التَّالِيَةِ i.e. the commencement of the limit,

273. "It is not thy responsibility to make them follow the right path; but Allah guides whomsoever He pleases. And whatever of wealth you spend, it is for yourselves, while you spend not but to seek the favour of Allah. And whatever of wealth you spend, it shall be paid back to you in full and you shall not be wronged."²⁷⁹

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَا نُنْفِسْكُمْ وَمَا تَنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا
ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تَنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُؤْتِ الْيَكْمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَظْلُمُونَ ﴿٢٨٢﴾

a28 : 57 ; 92 : 13. b2 : 282, 4 : 174 ; 8 : 61 ; 39 : 11.

Following these different senses and also keeping in view the different meanings of the word يَكْفِر (will remove), the clause وَيَكْفِر عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ may be rendered in four different ways : (1) He (God) will certainly remove from you your sins. (2) He will remove from you many or some of your sins. (3) He will expiate many or some of your sins for you. (4) He will certainly obliterate, or efface from you, your sins.

In the first and the fourth rendering, the particle مِنْ has been treated as redundant, used for the sake of emphasis only, and therefore it has been omitted in the translation and the word "certainly" has been added. But if we take the word مِنْ in the sense of "many" or "some," the meaning of the sentence will be as given in the second and the third rendering.

In the case of the second rendering the idea is that if we practise charity, those of our sins which are committed against the rights of God will be pardoned, but not those which are committed against the rights of men, for which other acts of virtue have been recommended. In the case of the third rendering the idea is that on the basis of charity practised in accordance with the injunctions of the Quran, God will so arrange that sins committed by the giver of charity against the rights of men will be pardoned by the very men who are sinned against.

But as it is possible that even after a man has been pardoned his sins may continue to rankle in his own mind, so God has promised to show a further favour to those who practise charity according to the teachings of Islam. This promise is implied in the word يَكْفِر (efface and obliterate) which is intended to hint that God will make them forget their sins and thus obliterate and efface from their minds all traces of the sins committed by them. This idea has been expressed in the last rendering. Thus a single small sentence has been so worded as to cover all the possible forms of forgiveness from its lowest phase to its highest manifestation.

279. Commentary :

As the verse relates to believers, the word هَدَى occurring in it does not mean "showing the right path" for believers have already accepted guidance. It means "making them follow the right path." It is indeed God alone Who can enable believers to continue treading on the right path and protect them from the dangers of the way. See also 2 : 6.

The Quran has here selected the word خَيْر (wealth) instead of any other word meaning wealth or property; for this word not only signifies "property" but "good and well-earned property." Nay, it signifies even more, for it extends to "anything and everything good." The choice of this word thus greatly extends the scope of charity and does not

274. *These alms are for the poor who are detained in the cause of Allah and are unable to move about in the land. The ignorant man thinks them to be free from want because of their abstaining from begging. "Thou shalt know them by their appearance; they do not beg of men with importunity. And whatever of wealth you spend, surely Allah has perfect knowledge thereof."*²⁸⁰

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ
ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ
التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ
عِ الْحَافَا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ۝

a48: 30.

confine it to the spending of wealth alone. The expression includes the doing of good to mankind in any form.

The clause, *while you spend not but to seek the favour of Allah*, is a great tribute to the Companions of the Holy Prophet. They are not bidden to spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of God, but are told that such is already their practice. This is also a form of exhortation which is considered to be more effective than a direct command or prohibition.

280. Important Words :

ضرب الشيء (move) is from ضرب. They say ضربته i.e. the thing moved. ضرب means, he struck or beat him with a sword or a stick, etc. ضرب في الارض means, he set out on a journey through the country or he journeyed through it (Aqrab).

تعفف (abstaining) is derived from عفف i.e. he abstained from doing what is unlawful or improper. تعفف in verb form also gives the same meaning with greater effort. عفة means, abstaining from the gratification of low desires. So تعفف means, abstaining from what is improper or unlawful (Aqrab).

سيما (appearance) is derived from سوم which is again derived from سام. They say سوم القرس i.e. he branded the horse with some distinguishing mark or sign. سيما or سيماء

or سومة means, a distinguishing sign or mark, or general appearance serving as such (Aqrab). الحف (with importunity) is derived from الحف. They say الحف i.e. he covered him with a sheet or a blanket, etc. الحف also gives the same meaning. الحف السائل means, the beggar begged with importunity, as if sticking to one like a covering (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary :

Circumstances sometimes compel people to remain confined in a place where they are unable to earn their living. Such men deserve help from the better-off members of the community. Two kinds of people come particularly under this verse : (1) Those who voluntarily stick to a place owing to the love of a holy man and never quit his company so that they may listen to whatever he says and observe whatever he does and then impart the knowledge thus acquired to others. A remarkable example of persons of this class was Abū Huraira, who embraced Islam only three years before the death of the Holy Prophet, but thereafter clove to the Mosque at Medina so that he might remain in constant contact with his beloved Master. The result was that he reported to the world a much larger number of the sayings and doings of the Holy Prophet than those reported by even such Companions as had embraced Islam long before his conversion,

- 38 275. "Those who spend their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them *shall* come no fear, nor shall they grieve."²⁸¹

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٥﴾

13 : 23 ; 14 : 32 ; 16 : 76 ; 35 : 30.

(2) Sometimes a Muslim becomes confined to a place owing to the hostility of disbelievers and, being surrounded by persecutors, he has often to suffer extreme hardships and remain without necessities of life. Such men are also among the fittest objects of help.

People generally help those who beg for help, ignoring those who need help but, through modesty or shyness, do not ask for it. The Quran exhorts Muslims not to confine their charity to those who beg, but also to look for those who are really needy and whom a sense of honour or modesty prevents from begging.

The words, *thou shalt know them by their appearance*, contain a tribute to the Holy Prophet, who is here spoken of as being able to know such persons as are in want but refrain from disclosing their needs to others; and believers are exhorted to follow the example of the Holy Prophet in this respect. Abū Huraira relates a personal incident which beautifully brings out this characteristic of the Prophet. He says that one day he was suffering from extreme hunger but, as Islam did not approve of begging, he could not ask anybody for food, and at the same time he would not leave the Prophet's mosque for fear of losing his company. At that time Abū Bakr happened to pass by and, in order to draw his attention to his own famished condition, Abū Huraira asked him to explain a verse of the Quran which dealt with charity. Abū Bakr, failing to understand his real object, explained to him the verse and passed on. Then came 'Umar, and the hunger-

stricken Abū Huraira approached him also with the request to explain the verse. 'Umar too failed to catch his purpose and, explaining to him the verse, went on his way. The Holy Prophet, who at that time happened to be within hearing inside his house, opened his window and with a bowl of milk in his hand, called Abū Huraira and smilingly asked him whether he was hungry. And, receiving a reply in the affirmative, he further asked him to invite all the seven men who happened to be present in the mosque at that time. Before handing the cup of milk to Abū Huraira, the Holy Prophet offered it to those seven men who were also hungry like Abū Huraira. All the seven drank milk out of the bowl but, says Abū Huraira, it remained as full as ever. Then the Prophet gave it to Abū Huraira who drank his fill. When Abū Huraira could drink no more, the Holy Prophet took the bowl and drank the remaining milk (Tirmidhī ch. on *Zuhd*).

The verse incidentally praises those who abstain from begging and hints at the impropriety of begging as the words *تَنف* (abstaining from an improper or unlawful thing) and *إِلَانَا* (with importunity) clearly indicate. The Holy Prophet greatly disapproved of begging and there are diverse sayings of his to that effect.

281. Important Words :

عند (with) signifies, with, besides, at, near, by, or in the presence of, etc. It also implies possession, as one says *عنده خير و فضل* etc.

276. Those "who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. That is because they say: 'Trade also is like interest'; whereas Allah has made trade lawful and made interest unlawful. So he to whom an admonition comes from his Lord and he desists, then will that which he received in the past be his; and his affair is with Allah. And those who revert to it, they are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.²⁸²

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي
يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا
الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا
فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ
وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٨٢﴾

3: 131; 30: 40.

he possesses goodness and excellence. *عند الله تراب* means, the kings of the earth are like dust compared with God. *عند* also signifies, in one's mind, or in one's opinion or estimation (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

Islamic commandments have been so made as to meet the exigencies of all times and all seasons. For instance, lunar months which rotate all through the year have been appointed for the observance of fasts and the performance of Pilgrimage, so that Muslims may keep fasts and perform Pilgrimage both in summer and winter, spring and autumn. Similarly, the five daily Prayers and the two supererogatory Prayers *تهجد (tahajjud)* and *نحي (duha)*, which are said respectively in the latter part of the night and in the forenoon, are so timed that a Muslim practically performs Prayers at all hours of the day and night. Similarly, charity is to be performed during both day and night, so that this righteous act of man may cover every hour of his life.

Observe also the beautiful order of the words. The word "secretly" corresponds to *night*, and the word "openly" to *day*. Thus a Muslim has to expend his wealth in the cause of

Allah not only in such a way and at such a time that others may be induced to follow his good example by noticing his charity, but also at such a time and in such a way that even the recipient of his charity may not know the donor.

It may be noted here that alms are of two kinds: (1) obligatory *زكاة (Zakāt)*, and (2) supererogatory *صدقة (Sadaqa)*. *Zakāt* is collected by the State from every man of a prescribed measure of wealth and is then spent by the State on helping the poor and needy, orphans, widows and wayfarers, etc. In this case the recipients do not know any particular donor and thus preserve their sense of self-respect. But as *Zakāt* is collected by the State, people are apt to look upon it as a tax and not as charity. So Islam has instituted *Sadaqa* also which is voluntary and is given to individuals out of a desire to help the poor and needy. Thus *Sadaqa* engenders feelings of sympathy among the well-to-do towards their brethren and feelings of gratefulness among the poor for their benefactors. It also serves to distinguish sincere believers from the insincere.

282. Important Words :

ربوا (interest) is derived from *ربا*. They say *ربا المال* i.e. the money or property increased

and became augmented. ربا means, an excess and an addition; an addition over and above the principal sum; interest. The Hadith defines ربا as *كل قرض جر منفعة فهو ربا* i.e. every loan advanced to draw profit comes under the definition of interest (Saghir).

يخبطه (has smitten) is derived from خبطه i.e. he struck or beat him violently; he trod him under his feet vehemently. خبط الليل means, he walked about in the darkness of the night without finding the true way. يخبط means, he struck or beat him violently. الشيطان means, Satan struck him and afflicted him with hurt or injury; Satan prostrated him (Aqrah).

المس (insanity) is derived from مس. They say *مس* i.e. he touched it; or he touched it with his hand. *مس المرض او الكبر فلانا* means, disease or old age touched him i.e. came on him. *مس الشيطان بنصب وعذاب* means, Satan brought pain and trouble on him. *المس* means, any pain or trouble, etc. that comes to a man by coming in contact with someone or something; it also signifies madness or insanity (Aqrah & Lane).

Commentary :

The prohibition against lending money on interest is preceded by a long exhortation to exercise charity. When a person becomes accustomed to spending his wealth in charity and alms, it becomes easier for him to lend money free of interest.

The Quran prohibits all kinds of interest. In modern times, however, business has become so inseparably mixed up with interest that it appears impossible to avoid interest altogether. But if a change of system as well as of surroundings and circumstances were brought about, business without interest would establish itself in the world as was the case in the days when Islam was in the ascendant.

The clause, *those who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity*, means that just as a madman

does not see the consequences of his actions, similarly those who lend money at interest become careless of consequences. They keep in view only their own immediate interests and do not care, and in fact generally become incapable of caring, for the great harm which they do to society and the world at large. Interest also encourages a person or a government to incur debt beyond his or its capacity and in this way also blinds them to consequences. Another way in which interest causes a touch of insanity is to weaken the sense of goodness and beneficence in man by making him over-engrossed in money-making. Interest also leads to war. Money-lenders are always creating circumstances which may cause conflict between one nation and another so that war may break out and the belligerent nations may be compelled to borrow money from them. Interest also helps to prolong war by encouraging belligerent nations to borrow money beyond their capacity. Again, interest helps the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and thereby most injuriously affects the distribution of wealth and the balance of society. Yet another manifestation of madness caused by interest is that those who pay interest have their sense of dignity lowered and they contract the habit of carelessness and hastiness, thus acquiring a resemblance to one stricken by madness. See also 2:280 below.

The words, *trade also is like interest*, represent the pet argument of the supporters of interest. They say interest is nothing but a form of trade. Just as in trade one invests money with a view to increasing and multiplying it, so does one in lending money at interest. But deeper thinking would reveal that there is a world of difference between the two. While interest is attended by all the evil consequences briefly referred to above, trade is not.

The words, *then will that which he received in the past be his*, mean that if one accepts

277. Allah will abolish interest and will cause charity to increase. And Allah loves not anyone who is a confirmed disbeliever and an arch-sinner.²⁸³

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُزِيهِ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ
كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ

“30 : 40.

guidance from God and desists from charging interest in future, the past will be forgiven him and God will make good the loss he may thus suffer by other means.

It should be remembered that any sum stipulated to be received or given over and above what one advances or receives as a loan is interest, whether the dealing is with an individual or a bank or a society or a post office or any other organisation. Interest is not confined to money. It extends to any commodity which is given as a loan with the condition that it will be returned with an agreed excess.

Finally, it may be noted that in view of the peculiar conditions of the present times, when there is a vicious network of the interest system surrounding us and Islam is in a greatly weakened condition, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement has declared that if a person is forced to accept interest he may do so and then spend the money thus received on (a) the propagation of Islam, and (b) paying off any interest that he may similarly be forced to pay. He should, however, scrupulously avoid spending such money on himself or his family or using it in any other way. (Fatawā & Alfaql)

283. Important Words :

يَمْحَقُ (abolish) is derived from مَحَقَ which means, he abolished or annulled or obliterated a thing; he annihilated it; he rendered a thing

deficient and deprived it of its blessing of increase (Aqrab).

يُزِيهِ (will cause to increase) is from the same root as رِبَا (interest) for which see 2 : 276.

Commentary :

The verse hints not only that Allah is abolishing interest and declaring it to be unlawful but that a time is coming when interest will be blotted out from the world and charity and alms will take its place. This promise was first fulfilled by the ascendancy of Islam in the East and the West, and now that the Promised Messiah, with whose advent the second and universal rise of Islam has been prophesied, has appeared, the promise will again be fulfilled by the re-ascendancy of Islam in the four corners of the world.

The words, *Allah will abolish interest and will cause charity to increase*, also contain the secret of world prosperity. If nations desire to prosper, they should stop the giving and taking of interest and practise charity instead. It is of interest to note that the word يَمْحَقُ (will cause to increase) is from the same root as رِبَا (interest). The clause thus beautifully hints that whereas the world looks upon the taking of interest as a means of increase, the real means thereof lies in charity. The words also mean that God, in His dealings with men, will deal kindly by those who spend their wealth in charity so that they will eventually prosper and thrive, while those who lend or borrow money at interest will be punished by God.

278. Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, and "observe Prayer and pay the Zakāt, shall have their reward from their Lord, and no fear *shall come* on them, nor shall they grieve.²⁸⁴

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٨٤﴾

279. O ye who believe! fear Allah and relinquish what remains of interest, if you are believers.²⁸⁵

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ
الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٨٥﴾

280. But if you do *it* not, then beware of war from Allah and His Messenger; and if you repent, then you shall have your original sums; *thus* you shall not wrong, nor shall you be wronged.²⁸⁶

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَإِنْ تَتُوبُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ
وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٦﴾

^aSee 2 : 4.

284. Commentary :

The verse points out that abstaining from interest and giving money in charity are highly righteous deeds and the righteous will have their reward with God. The verse also declares that in order to attain salvation (1) one must have true faith, and (2) do righteous deeds; and of the righteous deeds the verse singles out the two most important ones : firstly, the observance of Prayers, which pertains to the rights of God; and secondly, the giving of *Zakāt* which pertains to the rights of men. The noble spirit underlying the commandment relating to *Zakāt* runs counter to the evil spirit underlying the practice of giving and taking interest.

285. Commentary :

The verse hints that the taking of interest is against God-fearingness. The Creator loves goodness and beneficence towards the poor and the needy, fair and equitable distribution of wealth among people, and peace among the nations of the world; but the system of interest

strikes at the very root of these blessings. The closing words of the verse hint that the taking of interest is also against true belief.

286. Important Words :

فَإِنْ (then beware of) is derived from أَذِنَ (then beware of) is derived from أَذِنَ. They say أَذِنَ لَهُ i.e. he gave ear or listened to it or him; he permitted or allowed him. أَذِنَ بِالشَّيْءِ means, he knew the thing; or he became informed or apprised of it. أَذِنَهُ بِالْأَمْرِ means, he made him to know the thing; or he notified or announced it to him. أَذِنَ (adhdhana) or تَأَذَّنَ (taadhdhana) means, he made known or notified or announced (Lane).

حَرْبٍ (war) is from حَرَبَ. They say حَرَبَهُ i.e. he despoiled him of his wealth and property, leaving him without anything. حَرَبَ (hariba) means, he became greatly angry, or wrathful. الْحَرْبُ means, war; hostilities (Aqrab).

رُءُوسُ (your original sums). رُءُوسُ is the plural of رَأْسٌ meaning: (1) head; (2) the upper or higher part or end of a thing;

(3) chief or leader of a society. رأس الشهر means, the first day of the month. The word رأس also signifies the thing itself; as they say رأسه i.e. this is an independent species in itself. رأس المال means, the original sum without interest; principal; capital. The Arabs say اقترضت عشرة رؤسها i.e. he lent me a loan of ten pieces of money without interest (Agrab & Lane).

Commentary :

The verse declares that the taking of interest is tantamount to waging war against God. It may be inferred from this that those among Muslims who lend money at interest should be boycotted by the rest of the community. History bears testimony to the fact that such Muslim States as borrowed or lent money at interest were ruined.

It is often objected that no trade or commerce is possible without interest. This is not correct. There is no natural relation between trade and interest. The latter has become unconsciously associated with the former, as Western countries have based their commercial system on credit. If this had not been so, commerce would not have been dependent upon interest. Only a few hundred years ago Muslims were responsible for a large part of the world's commerce, and yet they carried it on without interest. They used to borrow money even from the poorer classes by way of partnership loans, and the commerce carried on by them thus contributed directly to the welfare of those classes. Interest is not at all essential for commerce, but as commerce is now being carried on, on the basis of interest, it appears as if without interest it would come to a standstill. No doubt, a change in the system would at first be inconvenient but the system of commerce depending upon interest can certainly be discarded.

Interest is, in fact, a leech which is fast sucking away the blood of humanity, especially of the

lower and middle classes. Even the upper classes are not entirely secure against its poison, but they are deriving a false enjoyment from it like the proverbial leopard who ate away his own tongue by rubbing it against a rough stone, foolishly thinking it to be the blood and flesh of another animal. Unfortunately those who are willing to forego it are too weak to withstand the force of the current system.

The system of credit prevailing in Western countries is destructive of the peace of the world in two ways. On the one hand, it helps the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and, on the other, it facilitates war. No government can be imagined as entering upon a great war unless it relies upon its ability to raise money by means of loans carrying interest. Long and devastating wars are made possible only by the institution of interest. If huge loans on interest were not possible, many countries would refuse to enter what appeared to be a long war; and if they entered such wars at all, they would certainly hasten to withdraw from them long before they actually terminated, for their treasuries would become empty and their people would revolt in protest against the criminal waste of men and money. But the system of what appear to be easy loans makes it possible for governments to carry on ruinous struggles as they are able to obtain the sinews of war without having to resort to a system of direct taxation. The people of belligerent countries do not at the moment feel the burden which is laid on their backs, but after the war is over their backs are bent double under the staggering weight of national debts and future generations are kept busy reducing the weight. Take, for instance, the case of the last Great War. If huge loans had not been possible, the result of the war would still have been the same, but the devastation and the heavy indebtedness of the different countries would have been avoided. Nay, the War itself might have been avoided; and even if

281. And if any *debtor* be in straitened circumstances, then grant *him* respite till a time of ease. And that you remit it as charity shall be better for you, if only you knew.²⁸⁷

282. And fear the day when you shall be made to return to Allah; "then shall every soul be paid in full what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged."²⁸⁸

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨١﴾

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٢﴾

^aSee 2: 273.

it had taken place, the belligerents would soon have been exhausted, peace would have been signed within a year, and the world would have proceeded on its forward march of progress. A worse fate is perhaps awaiting the Western countries at the termination of the present World War.

287. Commentary :

The preceding verse enjoined the taking back of the original sums only. The present verse further exhorts the creditor to grant delay to a debtor in straitened circumstances.

Creditors are exhorted to deal kindly and beneficently by their brethren so that God may also deal by them kindly. They should remember that if they have advanced loans to others, God has also advanced certain loans

to them by conferring on them His numberless favours and bounties; and if they have a right to charge interest, God has also a right to make heavy demands from them, but He does not. And if He did, what would be the fate of man ?

288. Commentary :

The verse sums up the discussion on the subject of taking interest by warning the people that the day is coming when they will be made to stand before God and render an account of their deeds. They should remember the principle, "Do as you would be done by." The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "None of you can be deemed to be a true believer, unless he likes for his brother what he likes for himself" (Bukhārī & Muslim).

9 283. O ye who believe! when you borrow one from another for a fixed period, then write it down. And let a scribe write *it* in your presence faithfully; and no scribe should refuse to write, because "Allah has taught him, so let him write and let him who incurs the liability dictate; and he should fear Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything therefrom. But if the person incurring the liability be of low understanding or be weak or be unable himself to dictate, then let someone who can watch his interest dictate with justice. And call two witnesses from among your men; and if two men be not *available*, then a man and two women, of such as you like as witnesses, so that if either of the two *women* should err *in memory*, then one may remind the other. And the witnesses should not refuse when they are called. And do not feel weary of writing it down, whether it be small or large, along with its appointed time *of payment*. This is more equitable in the sight of Allah and makes testimony surer and is more likely to keep you away from doubts; *therefore omit not to write* except that it be ready merchandise which you give or take from hand to hand, in which case it shall be no sin for you that you write it not. And have witnesses when you sell one to another; and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness. And if you do *that*, then certainly it shall be disobedience on your part. And fear Allah. And Allah grants you knowledge and Allah knows all things well. ²⁸⁹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ
فُتْمَةً فَالْتَّبُوا وَلْيَكْتُبْ بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَ
لَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ
وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا
يَبْخُسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا
أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمْلِئَ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِ
وَلِيَّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ
فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ
مِنَ الشَّهَادَةِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا
الْأُخْرَى وَلَا يَأْبَ الشَّهَادَةُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْمُوا
أَنْ تَكْتُبُوا صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَى أَجَلٍ ذَلِكَمْ أَقْسَطُ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَى أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ
تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ
جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهِدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلَا
يُضَارَ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلُوا فَإِنَّهُ نُسُقُ
بِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨٩﴾

^a96 : 5. ^b4 : 30.

289. Important Words :

ولي (someone who can watch his interest). ولي means, friend; helper; guardian of one's affairs;

he who protects or watches one's interests

(Aqrab). See also 2 : 108.

Commentary :

As the preceding verses prohibit interest and enjoin that only the original sum taken as a loan be returned to the creditor, the Quran now fittingly turns to the subject of loans not carrying interest. The verse enjoins that all transactions regarding loans should be committed to writing. It is really amazing, and is indeed a wonderful testimony to its divine origin, that the Quran, which was revealed about 1,350 years ago when the art of writing was yet in its infancy, should lay so much stress on writing down all transactions.

The verse should not be interpreted to signify that only such transactions should be committed to writing as have a fixed term for the paying back of a loan. The injunction is general and is meant to obviate or minimize disputes so as to leave no room for doubt as to whether any amount has really been lent and as to the amount of the money lent. The words, *for a fixed period*, have been added to emphasize the additional fact that whenever a loan is advanced a term must be fixed.

The verse further enjoins that when a transaction is made on credit, the document drawn up should be written by a third person so that there may be little chance of fraud and neither of the parties may have a cause of complaint against the other, both standing on the same level.

The borrower, and not the lender, is to dictate because : (1) it is the borrower who incurs the liability, and justice demands that the words defining the liability should not only be well known to, but also selected by him; (2) the document is to be deposited with the lender and not the borrower. So the borrower has been asked to dictate so that the fact of his having dictated may serve as a proof of the

correctness of the amount and the condition about payment, and he may have no ground to deny it.

The clause, *he should not diminish anything therefrom*, have been added because loans may be of different kinds. They may not always be in cash and may be for long terms and there may also be certain conditions attached to them. In such cases it sometimes happens that in drawing up documents people resort to trickery and leave loop-holes. So borrowers (who have to dictate) have been warned against such evil practices and have been enjoined to fear God and dictate with honesty and justice.

In the clause, *and call two witnesses from among your men*, the word "your" has been most wisely added to imply that the witnesses should not be strangers but should be known men residing in the same locality so that, if need arises, they may be easily summoned to give evidence. The words "such as you like," point to the fact that the witnesses, whether men or women, should be desirable persons and should enjoy the confidence of both parties.

The clause, *and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness*, signifies that if the scribe is a professional man, he should be duly paid for his services; otherwise wrong would be done to him. Similarly, a person should not be compelled, so far as possible, to become a witness if it causes him loss of any kind. Again, the scribe or the witnesses should also be paid their travelling and other necessary expenses when they are summoned before a *Qāḍī* or judge. The words also hint that the witnesses and the scribe should not be forced or threatened or bribed or otherwise influenced to suppress the truth or tell a falsehood when called upon to give evidence.

284. And if you be on a journey, and you find not a scribe, then let there be a pledge with possession. And if one of you entrusts another with something, then let him who is entrusted surrender his trust and let him fear Allah, his Lord. And "conceal not testimony; and whoever conceals it, his heart is certainly sinful. And Allah is well aware of what you do."²⁹⁰

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهْنَ
مَقْبُوضَةً فَإِنْ آمِنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي
أُؤْتِنَ أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ
وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

عَلِيمٌ ٢٩٠

^{a2} : 141 ; 5 : 107.

290. Important Words :

رهن (pledge) is derived from رهن. They say رهن الشيء فلانا or عند فلان i.e. he deposited the thing with him or gave it in his possession as a pledge or security for a debt, etc. رهن is one who makes such a pledge and مرهن is one who receives it. رهن and مرهن mean, the thing so pledged; the thing placed or kept in custody in lieu of a debt, etc. رهن which is the noun-infinitive from رهن and رهن (rahn) which is the noun-infinitive from رهن (rahana) mean, the act of pledging; also the thing pledged. رهن is also the plural of رهن (Aqrab & Lane).

امن (trust) and اوتمن (is entrusted) and امن (entrusts) are all derived from the same root. امن means, he trusted or he entrusted. امن فلانا على كذا means, he trusted him with that; he deposited it with him as a trust. امانة means, the thing committed to the trust and care of a person; also honesty, faithfulness and trustworthiness (Aqrab).

Commentary :

If a scribe is not available, loans may be advanced in the form of pledges, one party

receiving the loan of money and the other the thing pledged in lieu of this loan. This form of practical transaction, the verse goes on to explain, will be in the nature of an امانة i.e. a trust or deposit affecting both parties. By classing a loan with a trust it is hinted that loans should be returned with the same care and the same honesty with which property deposited as a trust is returned on demand.

The words, *and conceal not testimony*, either refer to the testimony of such witnesses as may be present at the time of the pledge, or it may refer to the testimony of the parties themselves. When no other witness is available, the parties are themselves treated as such and may be called upon to give a true account of the affairs on oath.

The expression, *his heart is sinful*, signifies that he who conceals testimony commits a sin which has not a temporary effect but vitiates the innermost recesses of his heart. Nay, it is a sign of the fact that his heart has already become vitiated.

- 40 285. To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth ; and whether you disclose what is in your minds or keep it hidden, Allah "will call you to account for it ; "then will He forgive whomsoever He pleases and punish whomsoever He pleases ; and Allah has the power to do all that He wills.²⁹¹

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَاِنْ تُبْدُوْا
مَا فِيْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ تَخْفَوْهُ يَحْصِبْكُمْ بِهٖ اللّٰهُ فَيُغْفِرْ
لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٨٥﴾

^a21 : 48. ^b5 : 19, 41 ; 48 : 15.

291. Commentary :

In this and the following two verses, with which the present *Sūra* concludes, the subject of *تزكية* (*tazkiya*) or purification has been dealt with as promised in the prayer of Abraham (2 : 130). By reminding us that to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, the Quran teaches us that since everything is God's, we must avoid all those things which He requires us to avoid and adopt all those which He requires us to adopt. If we obey the commandments of God, which are meant for our own good, He will cause us to thrive and prosper, for He is the controller of all causes and all effects.

The verse embodies the great secret of attaining purification. That secret is, that if you wish to become pure, you should begin with the root, *i.e.*, you should make your hearts pure. Says the Holy Prophet : "In the body of man there is a piece of flesh ; if this piece of flesh is sound, the whole body becomes sound ; if it is corrupt, the whole body becomes corrupt. Behold ! It is the heart" (Bukhārī).

The particle *ل* (for) in the Arabic clause rendered as, *Allah will call you to account for it*, means : (a) by means of or on the basis of ; (b) for or because of. Following the first meaning, the verse would mean "Allah will call you to account by means of it or on the basis of it" *i.e.* your actions will be judged on the basis of that which is in your hearts. They will be weighed from the

point of view of your motives. This is another way of saying, in the words of the Holy Prophet, *اعمال بالنيات i.e.* Surely, the actions of men will be judged by the intention or the motive with which they are performed (Bukhārī). Following the second meaning of *ل* the verse would mean, "Allah will call you to account for it or because of it" *i.e.* no human thought will be lost, however hidden it may be and that it will be requited or pardoned as Allah may will it.

In connection with the words, *whether you keep it hidden*, it should be remembered that God will not call man to account for passing or momentary thoughts that sometimes cross his mind, for they are beyond one's control. In 2 : 287 we read, "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity," and it is certainly beyond our "capacity" to check the fleeting thoughts that occasionally flash across our minds. It is only the evil thoughts that we cherish and harbour in our minds, such as malice, envy, etc., and the evil designs that we knowingly evolve and contemplate that we shall be called to account for. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that God has commanded the angels saying : "If a servant of mine thinks of doing an evil deed, do not write it down against him ; but if he carries out his intention, then write it down. And if he intends to do a good deed, but abstains from doing it, write it down as one good act ; and if he actually does a good deed

286. This Messenger of *Ours* believes in that which has been revealed to him from his Lord, and so do the believers: all of them believe in Allah, and in His angels, and in His Books, and in His Messengers, saying, "We make no distinction between any of His Messengers"; and they say, "We hear, and we obey. ^bWe implore Thy forgiveness, O our Lord, and to Thee is the returning."²⁹²

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ
كُلٌّ أَمَّنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ
بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَبِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ
رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨٦﴾

^aSee 2: 137. ^b3: 148, 194; 60: 6.

then let it be noted as ten acts of virtue" (Tirmidhi).

The expression, *whomsoever He pleases*, does not mean that God acts, as it were, arbitrarily without law or purpose. In the Quranic idiom the expression, "the will or pleasure of God," rather denotes the existence of a natural law (7: 157). But as in the case of Allah it is His will which stands for His law, therefore the Quran uses this expression to point out that (1) God is the final authority in the universe; and that (2) His will is the law; and that (3) His will manifests itself in a just and benevolent manner, for He is the possessor of perfect attributes (17: 111).

292. Important Words:

غُفْرَانَكَ (Thy forgiveness). غُفْرَان is the noun-infinitive from غَفَرَ for which see 2: 59 and 2: 200. غُفْرَان on the part of God signifies, covering man with mercy and forgiveness and saving him from the punishment of sins. It is used in the infinitive form for the sake of emphasis, words like "I or we implore" being understood before it.

Commentary:

The mention of the believers along with the Prophet has a special significance in the verse; the purifying influence of the Holy Prophet has brought into existence a

class of men who have become purified both in belief and in deeds, thus fulfilling the object for which the Prophet for whom Abraham had prayed was to make his appearance.

Good deeds are indeed the principal means for the attainment of purification, but they have their origin in the purity of the heart, which can be attained only by holding true beliefs. Hence the verse details the fundamental points of belief which the Holy Prophet taught his followers, i.e., belief in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers, mentioned in their natural order.

Among the points of belief detailed here, one is that true believers say, *We make no distinction between any of His Messengers*. This means that true believers should accept all the Messengers of God, without exception, and should make no distinction between them by accepting some and rejecting others. There is in this food for thought for those Muslims who reject the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement whom God raised in fulfilment of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet and who came to demonstrate the truth of Islam by cogent reasons and powerful Signs.

Another very important means of attaining purification is prayer. The verse represents true believers as offering prayer to God

287. "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity. It shall have the reward it earns, and it shall get the punishment it incurs. Our Lord, do not punish us, if we forget or fall into error; and our Lord, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us. Our Lord, burden us not with what we have not the strength to bear; and efface our sins, and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us; Thou art our Master; ^bso help us Thou against the disbelieving people.²⁹³

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا
مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا
رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إَصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ
وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا
فَاَنْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ٢٨٧

^aSee 2 : 234. ^b3 : 148.

in the ennobling words, *We hear and we obey. We implore Thy forgiveness, O our Lord, and to Thee is the returning.* This prayer contains four basic elements of purification: (1) man should ever be prepared to listen to God's commandments; (2) he should be ever ready to obey His commandments, whatever the circumstances; (3) he should always be asking for God's forgiveness for his sins and shortcomings; and (4) he should never forget that he will one day return to, and stand before, his Maker and will render an account of his works.

293. Important Words :

أَصْرًا (responsibility). They say أصْرَ الشَّيْءِ i.e. he broke the thing. أَمْرَهُ means, he confined or detained or debarred him; he held him in custody or he restrained him. أَمْرَ الْخِيْمَةِ means, he provided the tent with a peg or a rope for tying. أَصْرٌ (aşr) or أَصْرٌ (aşr) or أَصْرٌ (usr) means : (1) a burden which restrains one from motion; (2) a burdensome covenant or a heavy responsibility the breaking of which makes one deserving of punishment; (3) a sin or an offence; and (4) grievous punishment of a sin (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary :

The clause, *Allah burdens not any soul beyond*

its capacity, is a powerful refutation of the doctrine of Atonement. It embodies two important principles: (1) That the commandments of God are always given with due regard for human capacities and weaknesses. (2) That purification in this world does not necessarily signify complete freedom from all kinds of failings and shortcomings. All that man is expected to do is sincerely to strive after good and avoid sin to the best of his power, and the rest will be forgiven him by the Merciful God. So no Atonement is needed.

The word كَسَبَ (earns) has been used here with regard to the doing of good deeds and اكْتَسَبَ (incurs) for the doing of evil deeds. They are from the same root but the latter denotes greater exertion. Thus the words hint that a man will be rewarded for good deeds even if they are done casually and without concentrated effort, while he will be punished for his evil deeds only if they are committed deliberately and with concentrated effort.

In ordinary circumstances, نِسْيَانٌ (forgetfulness) and خَطَاٌ (error) are not punishable, for they lack intention or motive which are necessary for punishment. But here the words denote a forgetfulness and an error which

might have been avoided, if due care had been exercised.

As explained under Important Words above, the word *امر* (responsibility) gives a number of meanings all of which are applicable here. Hence, the verse may also be translated as: (a) Impose not on us a sin, i.e., enable us to avoid sin and prevent us from the doing of deeds which might make us stumble; (b) Do not punish us if we commit some sin or break some covenant; (c) Taking the expression *لا تحمل علينا* to mean, as it literally does, do not make it ride us or do not mount it on us, the clause may also be rendered as, do not make a responsibility or a covenant mount on us as Thou didst mount it on those before us. The simile is beautiful. Divine covenants are meant to help the people in their onward march; but sometimes, through abuse or breach, they become a burden, instead of a help, thus turning into a rider in place of a riding beast. Muslims are taught to pray against such an eventuality.

The words, *lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us*, do not mean that Muslims have been taught to wish for lighter burdens. The facts of history belie that inference. The words only mean that God may help Muslims to fulfil their responsibilities and to avoid sins as well as the consequences thereof. The previous peoples were entrusted with some responsibilities and given certain commandments which were all for their own good, but many of them failed to fulfil them and also rejected Islam to which they had been invited and thus turned a blissful guidance into a veritable means of incurring God's displeasure. Thus it was that they were virtually laid under an *ifr* or a burdensome responsibility. Muslims, being the bearers of the final and universal *Shar'i'at*, have been exhorted to set a better example and pray to God for success in their great task and in the fulfilment of their

heavy responsibilities. The laying of *burden* or *burdensome responsibility* has been attributed to God just as in the Quranic idiom *ضلالة* (misguidance) is sometimes attributed to Him for which see 2:7.

The clause, *lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay on those before us*, may also refer to Christians particularly who by declaring the Law to be a curse converted a divine mercy into an *ifr* i.e. a burden and a punishment. Muslims are thus taught to pray that for them the *Shar'i'at* may always remain a mercy. In this case the verse comes as a fitting preamble to the succeeding *Sūra* of which Christianity forms the special theme.

The clause, *and efface our sins and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us*, comprises three important invocations placed in perfect order. They not only correspond to the preceding three prayers but also constitute a perfect manifestation of a perfect treatment on the part of a perfect Master. *فاصفنا* means that God may efface our sins and leave out no trace of them to be seen by men. *اقرنا* means that He may not only efface our sins but also grant us forgiveness so that He Himself may treat them as non-existent. And *ارحمنا* means that God may not only efface our sins and forgive us but also show positive mercy to us.

The concluding clause, *help us Thou against the disbelieving people*, provides a fitting ending to the *Sūra*. The Muslims are out for a great struggle. The entire world of *كفر* (disbelief) is arrayed against them and the field of work, as hinted in Abraham's prayer (2:130), is wide and far-stretched, extending over (1) heavenly Signs, (2) laws and covenants, (3) wisdom and philosophy, (4) morals and spirituality, and (5) general progress. This was a stupendous task and unless God came to their help, there was little hope for that tiny Muslim community that was just emerging into existence. But God did come to their help.